A New "LITTLE PEOPLE" Story By EANDO BINDER

Fantastic ADVENTURES

JUNE 20c

ONSLAUGHT OF the DRUID GIRLS

By RAY CUMMINGS

H.W. McCAULEY

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHEN ugly flakes and scales begin to speck your clothes, when your scalp begins to itch annoyingly, it's time to act—and act *fast!*

Nature may be warning you that infectious dandruff has set in . . . may be telling you to do something about it before it gets any worse.

Start now with Listerine Antiseptic. Just douse it on your scalp and hair morning and night and follow with vigorous and persistent massage.

This is the simple medical treatment which has shown such outstanding results in a substantial majority of clinical test cases . . . the easy method used by thousands in their own homes.

Listerine often brings quick improvement, because it gives both hair and scalp an antiseptic bath. The loosened dandruff scales begin to disappear. Your scalp feels healthier, more invigorated. And meanwhile, Listerine is killing millions of germs on scalp and hair, including the queer "bottle bacillus," recognized by outstanding authorities as a causative agent of the infectious type of dandruff.

Clinical results of this simple, pleasant treatment have been literally amazing. In one test, 76% of dandruff sufferers who used Listerine and massage twice a day, within a month showed complete disappearance of, or marked improvement in, the symptoms.

If you've got the slightest symptom of this trouble, don't waste any time. You may have a real infection, so begin today with Listerine Antiseptic and massage. To save yourself money, buy the large economy-size bottle.

LAMBERT PHARMACAL CO., *St. Louis, Mo.*

THE TREATMENT

that brought improvement to 76% of cases in a clinical test

MEN: Douse full strength Listerine on the scalp morning and night. **WOMEN:** Part hair at various places, and apply Listerine right along the part with a medicine dropper, to avoid wetting the hair excessively.

Always follow with vigorous and persistent massage with fingers or a good hair brush. Continue the treatment so long as dandruff is in evidence. And even though you're free from dandruff, enjoy a Listerine massage once a week to guard against infection. Listerine Antiseptic is the same antiseptic that has been famous for more than 50 years as a mouth wash and gargle.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DO THE DEAD RETURN?

A strange man in Los Angeles, known as "The Voice of Two Worlds," tells of astonishing experiences in far-off and mysterious Tibet, often called the land of miracles by the few travelers permitted to visit it. Here he lived among the lamas, mystic priests of the temple. "In your previous lifetime," a very old lama told him, "you lived here, a lama in this temple. You and I were boys together. I lived on, but you died in youth, and were reborn in England. I have been expecting your return."

The young Englishman was amazed as he looked around the temple where he was believed to have lived and died. It seemed uncannily familiar, he appeared to know every nook and corner of it, yet—at least in this lifetime—he had never been there before. And mysterious was the set of circumstances that had brought him. Could it be a case of reincarnation, that strange belief of the East that souls return to earth again and again, living many lifetimes?

Because of their belief that he had formerly been a lama in the temple, the lamas welcomed the young man with open arms and taught him rare mysteries and long-hidden practices, closely guarded for three thousand years by the sages, which have enabled many to perform amazing feats. He says that the system often leads to almost unbelievable improvement in power of mind, can be used to achieve brilliant business and professional success as well as great happiness. The young man himself later became a noted explorer and geographer, a successful publisher of maps and atlases of the Far East, used throughout the world.

"There is in all men a sleeping giant of mindpower," he says. "When awakened, it can make man capable of surprising feats, from the prolonging of youth to success in many other worthy endeavors." The system is said by many to promote improvement in health; others tell of increased bodily strength, courage and poise.

"The time has come for this long-hidden system to be disclosed to the Western world," declares the author, and offers to send his amazing 9000 word treatise—which reveals many startling results—to sincere readers of this publication, free of cost or obligation. For your free copy, address the Institute of Mentalphysics, 213 South Hobart Blvd., Dept. 201N, Los Angeles, Calif. Readers are urged to write promptly, as only a limited number of the free treatises have been printed.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VOL. 3
NO. 4

Fantastic ADVENTURES

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

Contents for June, 1941

STORIES

ONSLAUGHT OF THE DRUID GIRLS (Novelet) . . by Ray Cummings 6
Lee Blaine went to find Earth's second moon, and found also a lovely girl in dire, mysterious danger.

WANDERER OF LITTLE LAND (Novel) . . . . . by Eando Binder 40
The Little People were forbidden to traffic with the Big Ones, but then, a favor ought to be returned.

THE MAN WHO BOUGHT MARS (Novelet) . . . . by Polton Cross 76
Hal Bailey bought Mars although it seemed worthless. But then he slept for a century and a half . . .

AMAZONS OF A WEIRD CREATION (Novelet) . . by Jep Powell 96
Spud Harris and Dr. Pipp were in a spot—two lone men in a woman's world; and what hags they were!

SIDNEY, THE SCREWLOOSE ROBOT (Short) . . . by William P. McGivern 116
Problem children are difficult, eh? Well, did you ever own a robot with a screw loose in his head?

BILL OF RIGHTS, 5000 A.D. (Short) . . . . . by John York Cabot . . . 130
There was Truth on that ancient scroll! And it inspired Shar to defy his masters, fight for freedom.

FEATURES

The Editor's Notebook 5
The Most Perfect Race 38
Forecast 74
Romance of the Elements 75
Fantastic Facts 129
It Can't Be Done 133
Introducing the Author 135
Quiz Page 136
Reader's Page 137
Correspondence Corner 146

Front cover painting by H. W. McCauley, featuring the Mac Girl in "Onslaught of the Druid Girls."
Illustrations by H. W. McCauley, Robert Fuqua, Magarian, Julian S. Krupa, Rod Ruth.
Cartoons by R. Newman, Guy Gifford, Dick Shaw.

William B. Ziff, Publisher;
B. G. Davis, Editor

Copyright, 1941
ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
608 South Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.
Raymond A. Palmer, Managing Editor;

J. Fred Henry, Business Manager
Herman R. Bollin, Art Director.

We do not accept responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. To facilitate handling, the author should inclose a self-addressed envelope with the requisite postage attached, and artists should inclose or forward return postage. Accepted material is subject to whatever revision is necessary to meet requirements. Payment for manuscripts and illustrations will be made at our current rates.

The names of all characters that are used in short stories, serials and semi-fiction articles that deal with types are fictitious. Use of a name that is the same as that of any living person is coincidental.

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES JUNE, 1941

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is published monthly by ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY at 608 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill. Entered as second class matter April 16, 1940, at the Post Office, Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3rd, 1879. Subscription $2.40 a year (12 issues); Canada, $2.90; Foreign, $3.40. Subscribers should allow at least two weeks for change of address. All communications about subscriptions should be addressed to the Director of Circulation, 608 South Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 4

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

IF you haven't already stared your eyes out at the lovely "Mac Girl" who reappears on our cover again this month, you must like this column immensely! Your editor thinks this is the finest cover he has ever secured for FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, and he's hoping you think the same.

It is a fitting cover for the fine story by Ray Cummings that provides our lead for this issue. A combination of excellence that'll be sure to tickle your literary and artistic palate.

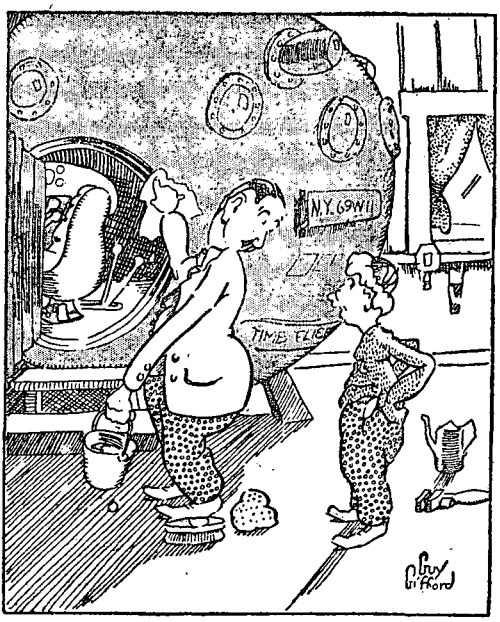
It isn't the last of the "Mac Girls" either. There'll be many more of them, and all we can say is that the reader who tagged her with that name, and forecast that Petty and Varga had better watch out, wasn't sending up any hot air balloons!

SHE'S coming back in August with a cover prepared for Nat Schachner's long awaited "Enchantress" story. Which is a crack story by an ace author who can really boast the title "name author."

THIS issue is another example of a fine "fantasy" issue. It has only one story that isn't true fantasy, that one is Polton Cross' fine fantastic Martian story, "The Man Who Bought Mars."

But you read it for yourself, and let the bars down in your comments. We think we have something here this month, no kidding.

WHEN an editor gets an issue like this together, it means he's done a lot of hard work, but there's another factor that seems to intrude in spite of all the credit he tries to take. That factor is chance. It's just sheer luck when a group of authors bats out top notch stories at the same time and we happen to get 'em in the same issue. We hope we stay lucky.



"Can I use the Time Machine tonight, Pop? I want to take my girl to the Boston Tea Party."

SPEAKING of luck, or chance, or fate, or what have you, here's a bit o' stuff that might give point to our point.

A little rainstorm was enough to alter the whole course of European history. This is how it was:

Louis XVI was fleeing from Paris away from the revolutionists to Austria to engage the aid of the Hapsburgs. He sat patiently in the hired coach watching the rain come through the leaky roof and soak into his clothes until he was chilled to the bone. He called to the driver to go faster and to reach the next inn where the party might await the rain's stopping. And thus it was that he was recognized when he stuck his head out of the carriage window to argue with the postillion as they passed through Vernes.

If he hadn't been recognized, he might have reached Vienna and procured Austrian assistance. Certainly he would not have been carted back to Paris and beheaded. If King Louis had not been beheaded, the way would not have been cleared for the ambitious little Corsican general who turned Europe topsy-turvy for twenty years.

All because it chanced to rain!

JEP POWELL has a new story in this issue. It's his second success with us, and we have two more in the house. One is a space story that'll appear in our companion magazine, AMAZING STORIES. It's about the most unusual character we've seen in many months, and maybe Mr. Powell will find other things for him to do. Mr. Powell has won a deserved measure of acclaim from readers of fantastic fiction.

SPEAKING of "different" stories, don't miss William P. McGivern's story in this issue.

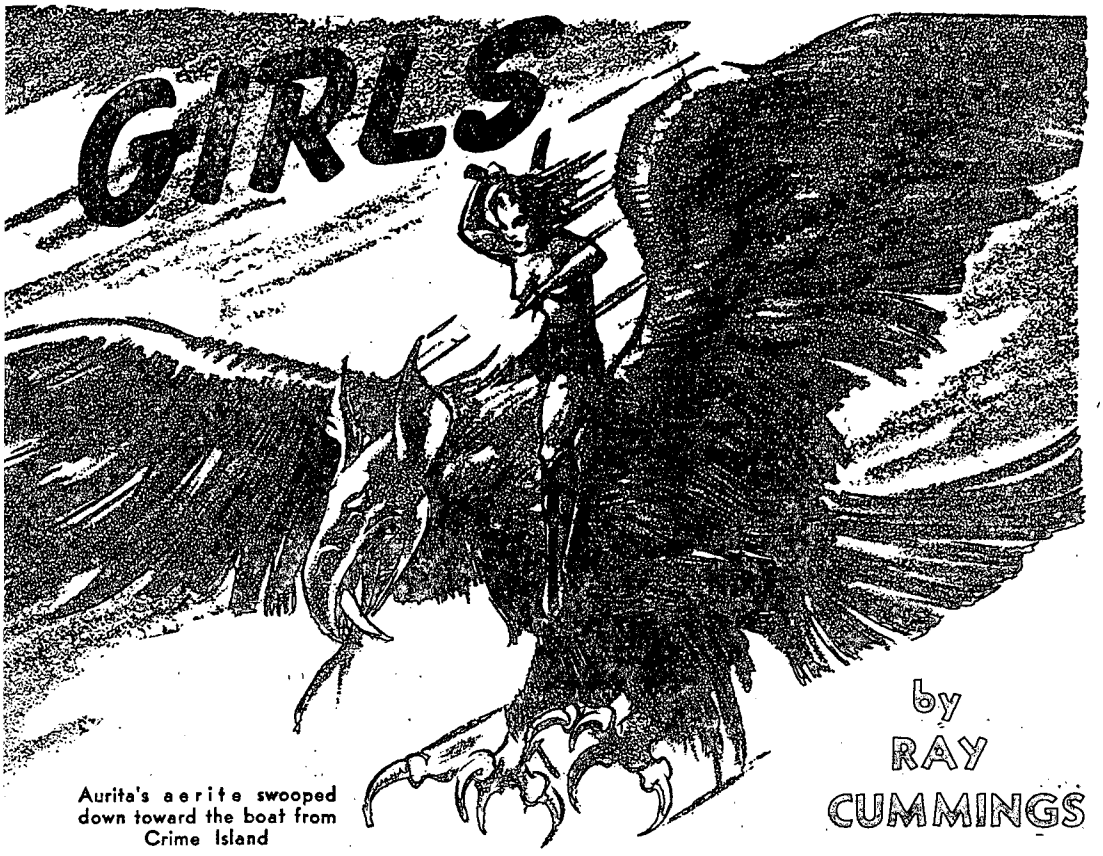
(Concluded on page 95)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Onslaught of the DRUID

When Lee Blaine reached Earth's second moon, he found a tangle of mystery. Who were the Nonites? What danger menaced Aurita and her Druid girls?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Aurita's aerite swooped down toward the boat from Crime Island

by RAY CUMMINGS

THE scream of the meteor, flaming its way down through the atmosphere, still echoed over the quiet Wisconsin countryside.

"Robert . . . Robert," came an anxious, startled voice penetrating the lonely observatory from the staircase that led down to the little cottage itself, "What has happened? What was that awful noise?"

"A meteor, only a giant meteor," Dr. Robert Blaine's old voice called down. "It landed close, Mary, but everything's all right, I'm sure . . ."

He turned and peered through the gloom of the observatory, toward the iron stairway that led to a tiny walk circling the room. Up there were a few small, shuttered windows. From them he might be able to see something . . .

Slowly, because his old joints creaked with movement, he walked around the telescope that took up most of the center of the floor. Halfway up the stairway to the tiny walk he heard footsteps behind him. Light footsteps, sure and dainty still, even though the woman who had come into the laboratory was white-haired and wrinkled with the years that make a grandmother so sweet.

"I'm coming up to see too, Robert," she said. "Besides, you know you shouldn't be climbing around here. You're liable to fall . . ."

"Now, Mary," he protested. "Just because you're my wife—these fifty years past—you don't have to treat me like those babies who've grown up and gotten out of your tender clutches. The years have meant less to you, because I've been kind . . ."

"Yes, Robert, and haven't I always

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been a good wife and given as much as I received? So now, it is my shoulder you must lean on, when you climb."

He waited on the stairway until she was at his side. Then he reached out and kissed her fondly.

"It's been a good life, hasn't it, Mary? A little lonely, but . . ." he paused as he saw the wistful look that flashed for a moment into her eyes.

"It would have been nice if Lee were here to help us both," she said. "He would take us to the meteor . . ." She stopped suddenly—

"Oh, Robert, do you think . . . ?"

"You mean—a message from him? The meteor . . . ?" Dr. Blaine frowned. "He promised he'd communicate—if he could—some way, especially if he could justify my theory . . ."

"Robert," she said swiftly, tremulously, "I have such a strange feeling. Almost as if our grandson were near . . ."

Together they climbed the stairway and opened a shuttered window to the stars. Outside, it was night, and the sky was a blue vault of jeweled treasure.

"It landed on this side, to the east," said Robert Blaine, peering with his old eyes into the night.

"Robert! Over there! A red glow—and smoke. The grass is smouldering in the roadside near the barn . . ." Mary's voice was youthful with excitement, and her still-beautiful face was tense.

Blaine peered in the direction she pointed, past the lacy cuff of her long-sleeved dress.

"Yes," he nodded slowly. "It landed there."

"A message—from Lee!" she exclaimed.

He laid a hand on her arm.

"Now, Mary, don't build up your hopes. Don't jump to conclusions. That's not the good astronomer I've taught you to be."

"I'm not an astronomer tonight," she said with a catch in her voice. "I'm a lonely old lady, with a woman's intuition, and a wish to hear from . . . from Ethel's boy. When you lose your own children, a grandson seems to become even more dear."

Robert Blaine put an arm around her shoulder.

"I know, Mary," he whispered. "I loved Lee, too, and that night he went away, out into space, saying he would prove I was right about the second moon and restore my good name in astronomy, I wished I'd never discovered Zonara. Always was an impetuous lad, was Lee. Never gave a thought to the fact that he was gambling his life for something so trivial as his grandfather's integrity as an astronomer . . ."

"It wasn't trivial to him . . . and besides, Lee knew what he was doing. He believed in space travel. I know he's alive, that he didn't die out there in the void." Mary's voice took on a sure tone. "That meteor out there; we've got to dig it up . . ."

BUT it was late afternoon of the next day before they got the meteorite out of the ground where it had buried itself eight feet beneath the surface. Henry, the hired man, had to dig a trench about it, then drag it out with the station wagon.

And then, when they got it into the basement, a welder had to come out from town to cut into its hard metal with a torch.

It had been, roughly, about three feet long and eight inches in diameter. Scarred and pitted, it was, from its fiery flight through the atmosphere. But even from the start, it had been obvious that it was no ordinary meteor.

"It's from Lee," Mary Blaine said

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

positively many times.

And when it finally fell in two halves, her woman's intuition was found to be correct. For the shell contained a variety of objects. There was a manuscript, on strange buff-colored material that wasn't paper; a sheaf of maps, charts, and computations; a folded note; and strangest of all, two great diamond-like jewels that sparkled and shone brilliantly as the light fell on them.

"Diamonds!" gasped Mary. "Bigger than any on Earth . . ."

"No," said Dr. Blaine slowly. "Not diamonds. Just some kind of crystal. But they are beautiful, aren't they?"

He picked one up and walked to the light to examine it. He peered into his carved facets, and an exclamation burst from him.

"Mary, look . . . !" he began.

"Robert," she interrupted him. "This note. From Lee. He's safe, and happy —but," her voice fell, "he says he has no means to come home . . ." her voice trailed away. "Oh, Lee, my darling . . ." she murmured.

Blaine took the note from her and read:

"Dear Mary and Bob (Lee had always called them that):" it began. "I am on Zonara, and I have proved all your theories. Charted proof is included in this shell, and the story of my adventures here. I am safe, but I cannot return to Earth. My machine is wrecked. I am happy, though, and would not leave if I could. If you will look into the crystals, you will find out why. Love to you both. Lee."

Dr. Blaine lifted the crystal he still held in his hand and stared once more into it.

"Look, Mary," he said gently. "Isn't she beautiful?"

Wonder in her eyes, Mary Blaine peered into the crystal, and a cry came from her old lips, as she saw, deep in its flashing depths, the shimmering image of a girl.

A tiny figure at first; but soon the image seemed to grow until Mary Blaine almost imagined she were looking through a window at the elfinly beautiful face of a lovely girl who stared out at her.

Long hair seemed to float in the wind, and deep blue eyes, filled with earnestness, and yet with a laughing joyousness, looked into hers.

"She's perfect!" breathed Mary. "Oh, Lee, if she's yours, then you *are* happy there on Zonara!"

"Look here," said Robert Blaine, handing her the other crystal. "It's . . . Lee!"

Looking out of the crystal she saw the handsome features of Lee Blaine, although an older, more manly Lee Blaine than the youth who had gone so bravely and so foolishly into space three years before. He seemed tall and strong and fully developed. His cheeks were tanned, and he was healthy and smiling and happy. It was almost as if he were speaking, so real was the image confined in the depths of the mysterious crystal.

"So much better than our pictures," breathed Mary. "He cannot ever be far from us while we have these . . ."

"Come, Mary," said Blaine. "Let's go upstairs and sit before the fire. You can read the manuscript. Your eyes are better than mine. I've spent too many long hours at the telescope . . ."

He put an arm around her shoulder and they went upstairs. There they sat before the fireplace and read the manuscript of Lee Blaine, who went to Earth's second moon to prove that it really existed; to vindicate his grandfather, Dr. Robert Blaine, who listened now to his wife's clear, quiet voice reading the story on the curious buff sheets

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that had crossed the void from 440,000 miles away in space.

And this is the story of Lee Blaine and of Aurita, the Druid Girl of Zonara:

CHAPTER I

A World Beyond the Moon

I AM addressing this, mathematically as close as I can, to my grandfather and grandmother, Dr. and Mrs. Robert Blaine, of Delavan, Wisconsin. However, if it should not reach them, but someone else, I will introduce myself.

I am an orphan. My name, Lee Blaine. I was twelve when my father and mother were killed in a laboratory explosion during a research experiment on atomic power. After their death, my grandfather devoted himself to me and my scientific training.

At twenty I was a technical assistant to a famous Chicago inventor. He and I were working secretly on artificial gravity control. He was a believer in doing, not talking, so he insisted on secrecy. And he had been successful. We had, in the laboratory, a little twenty-foot, one-man space-rocket, if you want to call it that. A finned, tubular steelite cylinder some six feet in diameter. As yet untested, but we were sure it would operate correctly.

Some of the technical details were mine, but I feel that it is not fitting for me to give them here. The anti-gravity force in the alumite-iridium alloys was the work of the inventor. Yet, with a humorous smile on this thin lips—he was already sixty years old—he named the machine for me. He called it the Blaine-rocket.

So much for me, Lee Blaine, and the original Blaine-rocket. You who read this may perhaps know far more details than that, anyway . . .

I must get on to the factors that ultimately led to my first—and last—voyage into space in that Blaine-rocket.

It all began when I got a letter from grandfather Blaine. It said simply, among the other homey things that a letter from the "folks" always brings, that grandfather's theory of a second moon had been rejected by the Astronomical Society.

But the papers said more. Far more! They picked up the story, and overnight, because of the strange sense of humor of a conscienceless newspaper writer, it became the laugh of the nation. *"Astronomer Moonstruck!"* ran the headlines. *"Sees Double!"*

For days the nation laughed at the poor old man in Wisconsin who claimed to have discovered a new moon, a second satellite of Earth, out beyond the orbit of Luna, some 440,000 miles away. No other astronomers would support the theory. None had observed it. Not even Grandfather had *seen* it. But he could prove its existence to his own satisfaction. He had called it Zonara.*

---

* The existence of a second satellite has long been a question of debate by astronomers. Certain perturbations in the orbit of Luna, and in the astronomical time calculations based on this body have led to the suspicion that somewhere in space a small body exists, or did exist, which also circled the Earth as a satellite. However, today, it is not thought that there is such a moon, in any size worthy of mention as a satellite. Yet, astronomers feel sure that at one time in Earth's past, a second, and quite large moon did exist, and was destroyed by some catastrophe, possibly by a wandering asteroid, like Eros, which approached very near the Earth recently, to within some 3,000,000 miles.

In the Carolinas there are a series of meteoric craters, discovered by aerial photography, which indicate that the fragments of a large stellar body smashed down there in the dim past. Was it the second moon of Earth, falling in fragments, that gouged out these craters? Possibly, say astronomers. They may be able to prove it someday, when computations now being made are completed. As to the present existence of a second moon, they only shrug. It could be so, they admit.—Ed.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I myself believed there was a second moon. My own father had suspected its existence, when he had been helping Grandfather in his observations. A tiny asteroid, with perhaps a strange form of atmosphere incapable of reflecting sunlight, so that its small, dark object had not been visible in Earth telescopes. They had located it approximately, and remembering, I could recall some of their computations. I could point to the spot in the sky where it *should* be.

I believed in it so much that thinking of it, and of Grandfather's justification, one day when a test was to be made of the new Blaine-rocket, the inspiration came to me.

ORDINARILY, my employer, the inventor, would have gone on the maiden voyage himself. But he was sixty; too old to withstand the rigors of such an experience. So he hired a "suicide-volunteer"—a professional hazard-man as they are called, to test our mechanism . . .

My idea was simple. I defrauded that hazard-man of his job. The night before he was to make his flight, when all was in readiness, I sneaked to the take-off field, stepped into the Blaine-rocket, and blasted off!

A fool stunt? The thoughtless act of a youngster? Perhaps, but was it any more thoughtless than the "stunt" of a newspaper writer who made an old man the laughing stock of millions?

I think I need not detail that pioneer spaceflight now. Certainly it is not important to my narrative of explanation . . . I was unconscious surely for the first half of the trip, with only my youth and strength saving me. Perhaps the hazard-man would not have fared so well.

The shock of the explosive take-off rendered me unconscious; I was well beyond the attraction of the Earth, perhaps being pulled by Zonara itself, when I recovered.

Then at last I could see my destination. I was still within the giant cone of the Earth's shadow, with the huge half-moon far to one side and now behind me, when slowly the drab, round disk of Zonara became visible. And then it was a monstrous, cloud-banked surface, filling all the Heavens under me as with retarded velocity I dropped down upon it.

I could see a forest along the edge of a lake; the lake itself winding about with mountain peaks off to one side. You may guess the pounding of my heart, my tense excitement as now, in the dim effulgence of the Zonara night, I came down under the cloud banks with the small, convex surface of the little world close beneath me. Dark little mountains, ragged with starlit metal spires; rivers and little lakes; and a vast, blue-black and brown forest, lying in patches . . . dark, mysterious. And queerly ominous . . .

I had the sudden feeling of menace, down there in the darkness of the forest surface. It was as though the aura of a strange fear down in its depths reached up at me . . .

I CRASHED through the forest-top and smashed the little Blaine-rocket to the ground. Inexpert; and certainly with primitive mechanisms at my command. At all events, again I was knocked unconscious. For how long I do not know. Then at last I was dimly aware that I was smothering; that I must get out of the cylinder . . .

Zonara!

My first awareness of it was that I was staggering out into darkness. The air was strangely heavy, choking so that my head reeled and sang with new violence. I felt myself sinking to a soft,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mouldy ground. The lush smell of vegetation was in the night air. Weird gnarled shapes of trees were thick around me; clustering air-vines were like tangled ropes everywhere—vines with pods and great elephant-eared leaves.

A jungle primeval. I did not quite sink back into unconsciousness this time. I recall that over my head, far up, faint straggling starlight was visible. And then suddenly I tensed, struggling up on one elbow as I stared.

A little brown shape, white-limbed, was running up there through the trees along giant boughs. A girl! I gasped in utter amazement. A lovely girl, human, here on a tiny world that Earth and humankind didn't even suspect existed! It was incredible.

She was swinging down on the vines as she descended.

The crash of my landing of course had been obvious. I saw her, fifty feet over me, and to one side, grip a dangling rope-like vine. And as she swung free, her weight came with it in a great swaying arc. Her hair and her little draped brown garment fluttered. Then she lightly struck the ground, with her skilled motion so that she kept on at a run until she was beside me.

Her long hair, gold among the tangled vines and leaves, fell loosely from her head, with a night breeze rippling it like a cloak about her brown-clothed body—a single, simple little brown garment from shoulders to thighs, with her pink-white rounded limbs glistening in the starlight.

There was fear upon her as she gripped me. Fear perhaps of me—but it seemed not so much that as fear of something else. In the darkness here she was only a blob, murmuring vehement, unintelligible words, with her hands pulling frantically at my jacket.

CHAPTER II

A Fight—and Flight—in the Dark

I COULDN'T understand her words. But I could understand the frightened glances she cast over her shoulder, and the plea in her lovely almond eyes, eyes that were not Oriental, yet strangely exotic. She was afraid of something that pursued her—was begging me to save her from it. Begging me, who was also a stranger, but obviously less to be feared even though unknown, than whatever or whoever menaced her from the forest's gloomy depths.

Now I could hear a crashing, the sound of a body forcing its way through the tangled vines. Mirrored in her oval, girlish face; obvious in the quickening pulse in her slim, white throat; rising with the panting heave of her young breast, was added terror at the sound.

She uttered a low cry. Unmistakable. A cry for help.

I sucked in my breath. Whatever followed her, I would face it. It would be worth facing, for the chance to look further on her beauty, so weird, so fascinating . . .

And I had to face it now; for into the tiny clearing burst . . . a man! Not a fanciful monster, but simply a man. A great, brutal hulk of a man, his evil face cast in an enraged mask of desire and passion.

He stopped suddenly, as he saw me, but then, before I had a chance to do more than thrust the girl behind me, he threw himself forward again.

With bone-crushing force he smashed against me, and as I went down, youth that I was, I knew that I would be no match for his brute strength in the kind of battle he sought to wage. So I scrambled frantically, almost in panic, to roll

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

away from his grasping arms, and to regain my feet.

Perhaps, to the girl, in that instant it appeared that I was afraid.

Afraid! Yes, I was. I had never fought like this before. I was used to boxing, in the gymnasium, sparring lightly. Here was an opponent who wasn't intent on getting exercise. He was intent on one thing only—killing me.

But when he came up again, rushing me, I did what I had always done in the gymnasium ring; I feinted, sidestepped, then swung from the balls of my feet . . . with all the vigor of my one-hundred-seventy pounds in a punch for the first time in my life! And I connected. Squarely on the point of his bearded chin my knuckles landed—and pain shot to my shoulder.

But suddenly I gloried in the pain, for the bruising hulk of a man went down in a heap. I knew that back on Earth any man hit like that should have been down for the count of ten. But to my amazement, not so with this fellow. He clambered drunkenly to his knees, shaking his head back and forth. And as he reeled there, he bellowed in enraged violence.

ON my arm I felt the pressure of soft fingers, heard the girl's urging, frightened voice. She was tugging at me. We were to flee . . . while we had the chance.

Rubbing my stinging knuckles, I turned, and rather precipitately, ran at her heels, following her beckoning figure. There was something about that brutal fellow that chilled my blood.

Killer! That was the word. He would kill me, or I would have to kill him! That I did not want to do. Cowardice? No. I was yet a stripling, unused to such a savage world as this. And my intuition, along with the persuasive urging of the frightened girl, told me that much of existence here lay in flight, without any dishonor. So we fled, we two, into the night.

And behind us came the crashing of pursuit.

I swept the girl up in my arms. Queerly weightless, slim little body; on Earth I would have judged such a weight to be twenty pounds perhaps. I would have tried to climb into one of the trees, but her hand shoved and gestured. Shining water was near us, some twenty feet away. I ran for it, and she made me put her down, running with me. We plunged in. Behind us the man stopped at the water's edge. His panting, baffled cry sounded—a hideous call. For a moment he stood on the shore, then he turned, lunged away. The underbrush crackled. Then abruptly ceased; he was waiting there, in ambush.

In the water beside me, the girl's pale face gleamed wetly. She looked up at me. Her soft, cool hand was on my arm, and she spoke in a musical series of syllables. I understood what she meant, from her motions. We would have to swim on, if we were to escape.

Together we swam. It was much like swimming in Earth-water. With her guiding me, we followed the jungle edge to where in a tangle of branches and vines, a vine-ladder hung from high overhead. I climbed it; amazingly easy to climb, with my weight half that of Earth and my strength the same—climbed with this amazing, lovely girl into a strange tree-top world . . .

I WAS gazing upon a tangle of vegetation—a great spread of tangled vines, strange huge leaves, pods and flowers, matted here into an undulating surface.

A forest top! I could see it plainly now in the starlight. A lush, tangled

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

jungle of gnarled, grotesque-shaped trees with their crooked branches and air-vines so intermingled that the top of it here was a spreading, continuous surface. The dim ground, black with shadows, was in spots faintly distinguishable a hundred feet or more below us.

And literally, this place was a village. Village in the tree-tops! Here this girl's people lived, and she had come back now, escaping from a strange man, savage, not of her people, yet human as she. What was the meaning of it? Why had the man pursued her, beyond simply the driving urge of his vicious nature? There had been hate, more than just frustration over her escape, in the bull-voice of the bearded man as he had plunged back into the forest there at the water's edge.

More to this than lay on the surface!

She spoke to me, her voice clear as silver now that the terror had all gone from it. I understood nothing, but I listened entranced, and as her people gathered around her, staring at me in wonder, at my strange clothes, she chattered to them excitedly, evidently recounting her escape from the beast-man, and my part in the encounter.

She told them, too, I could see from her gestures, of my Blaine-rocket, smashing down into her world from the skies.

But tiring of it all, I interrupted her. I pointed to myself and said:

"Lee Blaine. I am Lee Blaine. Who are you?"

She broke into a dimpled smile, and her eyes met mine with a new and kindling interest that was more than just curiosity.

"Lee Bla--a-aine!" she enunciated with a curious hesitation over the unfamiliar syllables. Then more swiftly, and with a pert, proud motion with one slim arm that included stabbing herself in the breast with a pointed forefinger, she said: "Aurita!"

I said it over, once, twice. Aurita. How amazingly descriptive! What it meant in her language, I could not know, but how close it came to Earthly "aura"! So apt; like the flame of her loveliness that surrounded her like a halo.

"Aurita." She said it again, herself, evidently greatly pleased with the way I had repeated it. And suddenly she laughed, aloud, clear. The tones echoed through the darkness of this strange tree-world. And in spite of myself, I found that I was laughing too, with some sheer exuberance that exuded from her very personality. Vibrant; pulsing with life she was. And yet, beyond our laughter, I thought I heard the thwarted shout of a burly beast of a man, lying in wait. Somewhere, over all this picture, was something evil . . . suspended, ready to destroy all such laughter as now rang from the loveliest lips on two worlds.

CHAPTER III

The Forest People

I MUST summarize many Earth-months. Eighteen or twenty, perhaps, though I lost count. The little world of Zonara? I can give here only a brief sketch so that you who read this may at least try to understand. My necessity, and perhaps that the language is of fundamental simplicity, made it possible for me to learn it in that time. Certainly Aurita was a willing, persistent and skillful teacher. So I skip those twenty Earth-months of time, translating the quotations of my narrative as well as I can into the English equivalent . . .

Little Zonara, second satellite of Earth. Some two hundred thousand

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

miles outside the orbit of the Moon, it revolves around the Earth once in approximately fifty Earth-days. Presenting, like the Moon, always the same face to the Earth, it has nearly equal days and nights, each of some twenty-five Earth-hours. Most of its small, convex surface is a barren, rocky waste, with patches of forest. This forest, in which Aurita's people lived, was no more than sixty or seventy miles in extent.

The Forest People: There were, I understood, some ten thousand of them, scattered over the forest-top in little groups which could be called villages. Nearly half of them were concentrated here in the city of Dreen.

Strange little group of humans, living here in the tree-tops.

A primitive people, these tree-dwellers of little Zonara. Yet I found them possessed, not so much of a primitiveness of mind, but only primitive life, of necessity, and perhaps desire. Nature on the whole was to them beneficent. Their needs and their wants were few. Water came in the form of rain; food grew in the tree-tops; in some places they engaged in agriculture on the ground. All primitive; yet I found their intellects fundamentally the equal, perhaps the superior of my own.

And they were experimenting now with science; reviving the work of past generations which had progressed astonishingly in scattered, isolated directions. But it had been neglected, passing into tradition, since, as Aurita's father—Ruler here in the city of Dreen—once told me with his slow, quizzical smile, science seemed only to be leading them into complications which would make their way of life less happy. And I wonder if that is not an ironic commentary of our own great civilization on Earth!

YET, there is another aspect. Perhaps no humans are destined to exist without problems—most of their own creation. It was a strange social order here, drifting now into its own created menace. I had thought I saw a lurking, submerged terror in Aurita's eyes. It was there. I saw it plainly, and I heard it in her voice, these months when she was teaching me her language. I recall those days when I was beginning to understand her words . . .

"It is coming, Lee—bloodshed here—a time when man will stand against man and try to kill. And Ptyah, my father, will not see that. And old Caroh, his Counsellor, he just laughs. He says that the Nonites will not dare to rebel, and why should they not do the dangerous ground work? Of what use in our world is a Nonite, save to work for us? But that is wrong, Lee."

"Nonites?" I asked her. "What are they?"

She shook her head, a frown on her pretty face.

"It is strange to me," she confessed. "They are—just different. How, I do not know. Except that they are not male, or female, like other people. It is not that they are queer; they are just another kind—a kind we do not exactly understand. I think that they are equal to us. But others do not think so."

"But where do they come from?" I wondered.

"From the Forest People," she said. "Occasionally, in almost all of our families, there is a child born that is neither male or female—not like us. When such a one is born, it is set apart from the rest of the family, trained among its unfortunate fellows into the lot of a ground-worker. A human being—and yet considered here not quite human. A sexless Thing, fashioned pathetically in its own mould—a Thing of muscle, brain, but supposed not to have emo-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion; no thought, no wish of its own but to do what it is told."

"What happens to them?" I asked curiously. "Why do you feel so perturbed over it? After all, it is something you cannot control. It would be wrong to assume them the same as yourselves, and make them try to fit into an environment that does not fit them."

"Some of them become slaves," Aurita explained. "But most of them are banished. They live in villages of their own. They are outcasts—shunned by every one of the Forest People. They are not permitted to return to their own families, except as slaves, and then only a few of them."

Aurita paused, her eyes sad, and filled with that mysterious fear that I had so often noted. I was about to question her about it when she went on.

"But that is wrong, Lee. A Nonite—how can we say what it thinks, what it feels? It is human, Lee—as human as we are." Aurita's little face was earnest and her eyes glowed. "You have seen the Nonites. You know we do not treat them right."

I had indeed seen them. Several worked here in the big dwelling of woven vines and thatch, bound into the tree-tops, which was the Ruler's home, perched at an edge of Dreen near where the forest ended at the lakeshore. The Nonites were about up to my shoulder in height. Taller, stronger than the men here, with well-formed heads and glistening hair, a face cast in handsome mould except for a more pallid, white skin and a curiously blank expression. It was as though nature had given them a mask to hide their emotions. But their eyes—

I RECALL that one of them came into the rustic little apartment where Aurita and I were talking, bringing us food and drink which she had ordered. This one was called Groff. It stood respectfully serving us. And then suddenly it said, to Aurita:

"You and the other Virgins—you have plans to help us Nonites?"

"Oh yes, we have indeed, Groff—"

"Because," the Nonite said, "two more of the ground-workers disappeared just before this last time of sleep. And I hear things among my people—"

I tensed. "What do you hear, Groff?"

It went suddenly sullen. But the gleaming, almost phosphorescent eyes of the Nonite sent a shudder through me.

"Nothing," Groff said. "That is just my idea to warn you."

It turned and stalked away—stalwart, pale-white thing of rippling muscles, clad in a brief nondescript white garment wound around its middle. The ghostly replica of a human being. I have seen groups of them toiling on the ground in the starlight. They look like phantoms.

That was the night when Aurita took me to the edge of the forest a little distance beyond the city outskirts, to show me the sparite crystals. The sparites were found in the distant barren lands; they had been known to the men of science of former generations. Natural image-receivers, they were termed here.*

Dug from the ground, in the dark, they were carefully wrapped so that

* Obviously these crystals, like photographic film, are sensitive to light, and when exposed to it, undergo a chemical change which fixes the light rays in their depths, so that the scene they mirror upon first exposure is retained permanently in their interiors, and is visible, from all angles through their many facets. The uncanny crystals therefore, present, at one and the same time, a three dimensional photograph of the scene impressed in them from all sides, and can be so viewed by simply looking through the different facets.—Ed.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

light did not touch them. Then, later, when opened to the light, they received the light rays of the scene around them, and mirrored it perpetually in their depths, like a crystal photograph.

With the enthusiasm of a child she dug into the earth, finally uncovering one of the crystals. Carefully, while I stood in bewilderment behind her in the dark, she wrapped it in a cloth and put it in a bag she carried slung over her slim shoulder. Then she dug another, and when we came from the forest, into the treetops, she explained to me.

"They will capture our images, with light. All we need do is look into them and step into the moonlight."

She handed one to me, and then took the other herself.

"Smile into it," she said naively, "so that you will look nice!"

Then we walked out of the dark into a moonlit patch in a clearing. And as I stared into the crystal, I saw mirrored in its depths my own features, smiling back at me. And they grew clearer, resolved from shadowy dimness to sparkling, moonlit clarity. I gasped.

There, within that crystal, my image, clear as the crystal itself, and eerie in its naturalness! And though I was no longer smiling, but amazed, the image did not change. As it had first received my image it remained—permanent, wonderfully real and perfect in every detail.

I snatched her crystal from her and looked into it. There she was, every lovely feature of her, smiling back at me.

"It is yours," she murmured. "So that you will always be able to see me when you wish . . ."

"It—it is beautiful, Aurita," I murmured.

I touched her, with some of my emotion undoubtedly stamped upon my face, but she drew away with a sudden, half-frightened virginal timidity. She had always been like that. And yet there were times when she would gaze at me slantwise, with her dark eyes impish as though to provoke my love-making . . .

"Let us go down to the castle-cliff and look over the lake," she said hastily now. "We can see the island where my brother, and his colleagues work."

CHAPTER IV

Aurita's Fear Explained

I HAD met her brother, Raalt—a slim, handsome young fellow nearly as tall as myself. Several hundred of the young virgins here in Dreen had long ago sworn that they would do all they could to help the Nonites; and Raalt had felt the same. He was one of ten young men who were working now in a science-laboratory which had been established on a small island—a honeycombed rock like a little gibraltar in the lake some twenty miles distant.

It was called Castle-Cliff. They were working there on a vibration-beam. Traditions of it had come down from former generations; old apparatus had been found. A vibration which dissolved any living tissue with which for a moment or two it came in contact. A weapon to use against the criminals—such as the beast man with whom I had fought that first day I landed on Zonara. Then the Virgins and children could venture on the ground in safety; agriculture would be more extensive. All the Forest People would be benefited. The tree-tops gradually could be abandoned; the ground at last would be habitable.

Fatuous humans! As though a weapon like that would be used only for such a purpose! Our whole his-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tory of earth has demonstrated the contrary.

"You see," Aurita told me with her girlish enthusiasm. "That we have promised the Forest People. Never will there be danger to them again. My brother and I—we persuaded my father and his Counsellors that the weapons must be made. Our flying knives*—they are really useless against the criminals."

I wondered again about these beast men, but I had no opportunity to question her now.

Raalt and the young men with him were just finishing the projectors. A dozen or more of them, with an effective range of some five hundred feet . . .

Aurita and I, that starlit night, went down a little path leading to a tunnel-mouth entrance to the inner grottos some miles down the lake.

And then suddenly, on the path Aurita gripped me.

"Look Lee—how strange—one of Raalt's companions—"

The figure had abruptly appeared coming along the path. He seemed lurching, staggering, as though perhaps he had been drinking too much *palka* —intoxicating beverage, made from the pulp of tree-pods. We held our breaths as we watched him with his unsteady, lurching steps. Then he staggered off the path, into a patch of shadow where he seemed to fall. We waited, but he did not rise.

Queer. Surely Raalt and his young men were working too hard out there to bother with *palka*. I met Aurita's white-faced stare.

"He—looked drunk," she said. "On the mainland, on a spree . . ."

I nodded.

"Well—" I said. "Too bad—"

We were abruptly too perturbed to voice our thoughts. To us both it had seemed, for days now, as though some unseen menace were descending upon our little world. Forces here, brewing with an aura of evil that you couldn't miss. The sullen, resentful Nonites; Raalt's dissolving beam—lethal weapon seemingly so out of place in this quiet, primitive little realm—so fatuous of us to think that it would only be used against the criminals!

Aurita seemed to read my tumultous sweep of thoughts.

"The men of crime," she burst out abruptly. "Oh Lee, I am so afraid of them—out there on their island-ring. Afraid of them—all my life."

I DREW her down beside me on the rocks beside the path.

"What is it, Aurita," I asked. "What is it that you fear so much?"

She looked at me, her eyes troubled. Then she spoke. Strange story she told me there in the moonlight. Incredible. But true; I could see it in the trembling of her lips as she spoke.

"It is our civilization. Something wrong with it. To most of us, it is the Nonites who are the cause of all the trouble. Yet, to a few of us, the real answer is obvious. But what can we do about it—unless, soon, the new weapons are ready . . ."

"Ah!" I interrupted. "I knew it!"

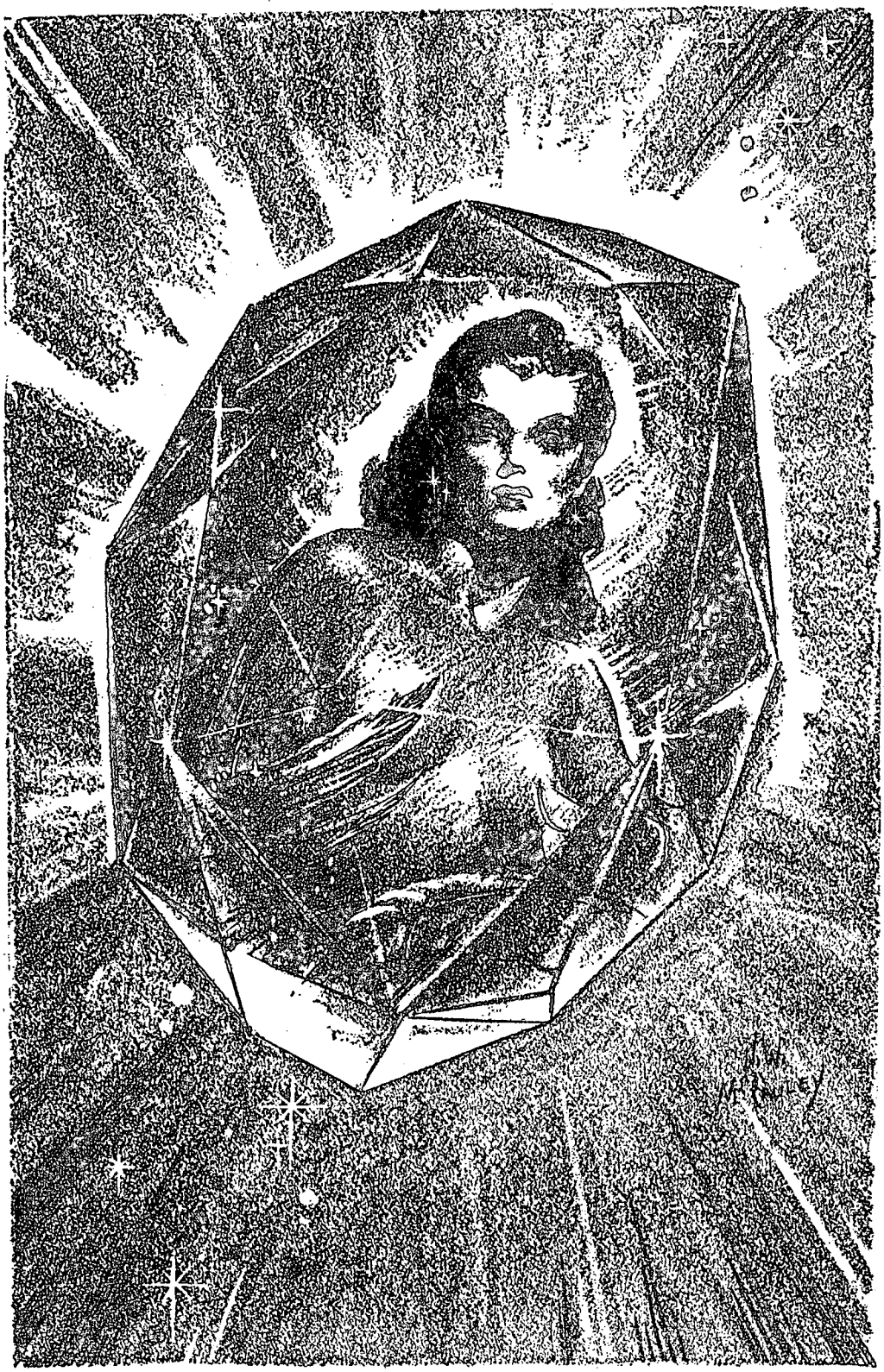
"Knew what?" She looked at me puzzled.

"Never mind," I said. "Let me hear more."

"I've called them criminals. Although among the Forest People there is no crime. No theft, no murder—that is," she amended hastily "until

* Flying knives—a naked handle-less curved blade shaped like a boomerang, about a foot long. It is double-edged, pointed at both ends. The blade is hurled by a little sling, rotating, and is used mainly to kill tree-reptiles and to cut down birds of prey in the forest which served as human food. The Virgins are all adept with them.—Ed.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



It seemed as though she lived and breathed in the crystal

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lately. Among us there is only one important class of criminal. The kidnaper."

"The kidnaper?" I frowned.

"Yes. It is a crime against both the children and the Virgins. It is punishable by life-exile. The real crime is kidnaping of children, but it has come to include the Virgins too, because they too could be of the same use to the kidnapers . . ."

"I don't understand . . ." I began.

"You will. Remember the man you fought the day you came to Zonara? He was a kidnaper, sentenced to life-exile because he tried to make advances to a girl. Little evidence of intent to kidnap is necessary. Only the girl's statement, with perhaps a few corroborating statements.

"Some three hundred kidnapers are in exile now. They are on a little island near the one where my brother, Raalt is working. It is where the castle cliff turns a sweeping right angle, and the lake broadens into a great forty-mile, almost circular expanse. It is in the center of this expanse, a lone island of a few hundred acres.

"There is a little soil there; a few stunted, gnarled trees, with vines, pods and flowers. Crime Island, we call it. The three hundred kidnapers have been banished there; they live in crude stone and thatched dwellings; grow a little food. And at intervals food and minor necessities are taken to them. No offender is supposed to build a watercraft and leave the island. That is a crime punishable by death. And yet, they do leave—more now than ever . . ."

I interrupted her now.

"But why kidnapers?" I asked. "What can they possibly gain from kidnaping. Is it ransom? I didn't even know you had money here?"

"Money? What is that? No, we do not have it here, whatever it is. The reason for the kidnaping is because of the Nonites. You see, it is a law among the Forest People that any Nonite couple who shall marry and bear a normal human child, shall thereby regain their status as human beings, and be freed either from slavery or exile. Thus, the crime of kidnaping, which is the worst crime that can be committed on Zonara, has become prevalent. Babies are stolen, delivered to the Nonites who wish to escape their exile, or be freed of their servitude, and they pass it off as their own child."

"I see," I said slowly, the light breaking over me now. "But what of the Virgins?"

"They are kidnaped too," she shuddered, "and they are never seen again. It is believed by most of us that they are forced to marry a criminal of the Crime Island, and their children, being normal human children, sold to the Nonites in return for something, some favor, that we haven't discovered yet. Raalt thinks they are dealing in weapons—flying knives, boats . . . but we do not know for sure."

She was silent for a moment, then she started up.

"We must go back to Dreen," she said swiftly.

"You going to tell your father what we saw?" I suggested.

"No. You and I—we must go to the island and see Raalt."

A desire to shield her brother and his companions, because that might have been a drunken man we saw!

THE tree-top tangle swayed with a little rising night-wind as we followed one of the thatched bridge-like paths. A storm coming? Then the city of Dreen showed in the starlight before us.

Fantastic little group of human hab-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

itations. Mound-shaped little dwellings of brown and purple thatch, roped into the tree-tops like birds' nests. At different levels; in little groups, or strung in rows. Platforms were in front of some, where the people lounged in the starlight. Ladders and roped vines connected them; thatched paths at intervals lay like streets; and at lower levels other strung paths were almost like little tunnels through the lush tangle of foliage.

Flimsy city. It had that appearance now as it swayed, undulating gently in the rising night-wind. Torchlight showed through the side openings of the larger dwelling, roped into the branches of one of the highest trees, which was Aurita's home. We found Aurita's father there, with Caroh, his chief Counsellor. And Torm, Caroh's son.

Torm was speaking as we entered. He was a tall young fellow, nearly my own height; wide-shouldered, powerful. His face, with high-bridged nose, wide thin slit of mouth and the queer slant eyes, was considered handsome masculinity here. His well-muscled figure was clad in short, brown leather jacket and a round, purple lower garment, knee length. The insignia of his rank as sub-Counsellor was a varicolored band of fabric which he wore around his forehead, binding his brown tangled hair which fell long about his ears and was cut at the base of his neck.

"If the Virgins had not promised so much," Torm was saying, "then would the Nonites perhaps not have gotten these ideas."

"The Nonites will do as they are told," old Ptyah, Aurita's father, retorted. "I shall call them and talk to them. Two of them dead, mysteriously murdered? And what is that? The others should be thankful it was not they."

Old Ptyah looked at Caroh for approbation.

Long ago I had, I think, correctly judged these two men. Aurita's father, ill now, weak of will, with the traditions of the social order here the only things in his mind. But this Caroh was different. A scheming fellow of perhaps fifty. Whatever his purpose, certainly on Earth I would not have trusted him with a minimum copper coin, even though it was counterfeit. Nor his son, Torm.

Or was that because I was jealous? Torm certainly was a handsome, swaggering fellow here. And of all the young virgins, I could not miss that it was Aurita to whom he was most attentive.

WE sat for a time listening to the talk. The Nonites seemed upon the verge of rebelling—a thing unprecedented, unthinkable.

"If any Nonite dares rebel," Caroh was saying grimly, "I will toss that Nonite off the castle-cliff while the rest of them watch. That will fix them."

"That you will never do," Aurita said abruptly.

"The Virgins," Caroh retorted, "talk too much. If they had not started this trouble, encouraging the Nonites—"

I drew Aurita away. Outside the wind was still rising. If we were going to see her brother, certainly we should be starting. Torm followed us to the door-oval. He took me aside.

"You never speak to put your word into our affairs," he said. "Perhaps you are right." He glanced at Aurita and lowered his voice. "The Virgins mean well—I agree with them, of course. But—you might as well know it, Lee—I am more worried over this thing than I will say."

"So am I," I agreed.

"Your flying platform," he said.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You have it nearly ready? Surely a wonderful thing—especially for us men who cannot ride the aerites."*

"Yes, almost ready," I evaded. It was completely ready, though Aurita and I had not yet tested it—a little platform which I had constructed from the gravity plates of the wrecked Blaine-rocket in which I had come from Earth.

"That is good," Torm said. "I shall be glad to try it with you."

We got away from him presently; descended a vine-ladder to where Aurita's small boat was at the lakeshore—a narrow, canoe-shaped hull some thirty feet long. It's bow was decked over for a little shelter. It had a triangle of thatch for a crude sail. It was a buoyant, fragile little vessel, light as though built of cork. With a fair following wind it could make astonishing speed; or with adverse wind, be paddled like a canoe.

We sat in the stern, with the wind now behind us. Soon the flickering lights of Dreen were fading; the dark blob of the forest-edge merged in the gloom.

For a time we did not talk. Beside me Aurita sat steering, staring grimly ahead. The wind fluttered her long golden hair forward over her shoulders. It brushed me, and my fingers entwined in one of its soft tresses that lay on the seat between us.

"This could almost be on Earth," I said softly. My words mingled with the sighing of the wind and the slap of the water against our bow. "Aurita dear—"

Almost like Earth? As though to belie my words, to one side of us, above the close-curving horizon of this convex little world, a flash of red lightning split the sky. And then came the booming, eerie crack of muffled reverberating thunder. A red-storm coming . . .*

"Lee—look there—"

SHE gestured ahead of us. The watery horizon was no more than two Earth-miles away. A boat coming toward us had suddenly appeared. A boat, smaller than our own, being paddled into the wind. We were up to it in a moment. It was Aurita's brother, alone in the stern. I dropped our sail and we brought the boats together. Raalt was pallid, shaking.

"One of our men found stabbed," he gasped. "A flying knife that cut into his side."

That staggering man we had seen on the path! Quite evidently he had been bleeding from the wound, had been trying to get back to his boat, to his companions, and had fallen in the shadows beside the path, where later Raalt had found him.

"He was just dying," Raalt was gasping. "He was just able to murmur—an exile—escaped from the island of crime—who killed him!"

* Aerites—giant birds, brown and white with great green wings, spreading a full fifteen feet. Almost like a hawk, with strange huge-beaked head and sharp, pointed ears. However, they are really gentle creatures of the forest-top. At Dreen, Aurita's city, many of them are domesticated. They have at least the intelligence of an Earth dog—the same obedience and willing loyalty. The young Virgins of Dreen, weighing what on Earth would be no more than twenty pounds, often ride the aerites. But the men, more than twice as heavy, could not be carried by the willing birds. —Ed.

* Red-storm—On Zonara electrical storms are different than on Earth. The quality of the atmosphere makes the lightning flare brilliant crimson, possibly because of a high neon content, and the chemicals that make for red in the electrical discharge. These storms are quite violent, and whip up terrifying winds that rise and die with devastating suddenness. The spectacle of a red-storm in full sway is a magnificent, though terrible one. The heavens are a continual flare of rolling, blood-red, moiling with scudding clouds. And the thunder, too, is a particularly ear-piercing, crackling kind.—Ed.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The kidnapers had dared to leave their island of crime! They were roaming loose, killing! . . . It was as though the red lightnings at the horizon were a symbol of the crimson torrent that now would engulf our little world! The men of crime; the unfortunate Nonites; the altruistic, crusading virgins . . . Diverse human motives, brewing here for so long in this little cauldron—simmering with an aura of impending horror . . .

And now it had broken loose!

CHAPTER V

Grotto of Death

WE stared numbed at Raalt, with the red lightnings flashing again at the horizon and our little boats bobbing on the waves in the rising wind. I had with me a single small weapon which I had brought from Earth—a little heat-gun, capable of drilling a hole through a man at a distance up to some thirty feet. Futile weapon indeed, with what seemed upon us now.

"And that murderer, he escaped from you?" Aurita was saying.

Murderer! The very sound of the word made both of them shudder. There had been no murderers here on little Zonara.

"Yes," Raalt agreed. "We searched our rock. He must have come and gone in a boat. But there are so many caves—the rest of us were searching still when I left to get help from Dreen. We have no boat there just now big enough for us all, and the weapons."

"The projectors are ready?" I demanded.

"Yes, for the criminals. They will work—they will kill the murderers—"

Another stab of the red lightning flashed up from the horizon—a great forked crimson streak. It struck the sullen, scudding purple clouds, painted them with crimson. And for that second, put a blood-red stain upon us all.

Aurita was gripping me.

"Oh, Lee—what shall we do? Our boat here—so big, hardly could we shove it against this wind to get back to Dreen."

"I will go to Dreen," Raalt put in. "My smaller boat—I can handle it if I start now. And tell them in Dreen that our projectors are ready. Never again will there be danger on the ground for the Forest People."

Danger? My memory went back to the sullen Nonite, Groff. The Nonites were smouldering with rebellion now. Their resentment had startlingly increased within the last few days. Was there some connection between that and this exile who had dared leave his island of crime and commit murder? Raalt and Aurita were gazing at me—both of them so young—looking to me to say what should be done. It was the first time in this world that anyone ever had done that. My world now . . .

"I'll go on to the castle-cliff," I said abruptly. "The projectors must be mounted, made ready. Raalt, you take Aurita—go to Dreen—tell your father there is danger—real danger. Have the young men of Dreen organize to watch the Nonites." I leaned toward him so that perhaps Aurita would not hear. "Have those young men armed with the flying knives. If any Nonite causes trouble—that Nonite must be killed, you understand? It may precipitate things, but I don't think so. I think the other Nonites would be frightened."

Aurita had heard me. She gave a little cry of protest, and then checked herself. How quickly one may get used to the necessity of bloodshed!

"Yes, I will do that," Raalt agreed.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And your volplane—the little anti-gravity flying platform—"

"It's ready. I'll test it when I get back—"

"Oh—look there—" Aurita said. "An aerite coming. A girl is riding it—"

WE followed Aurita's gesture. Off in the lurid storm-sky—in the direction away from Dreen—a little dot was visible. It came struggling nearer, flying toward Dreen against the wind. An aerite winging toward us. Then we could see the brown blob of the girl astride its back, with her arms around its neck and her hair and her draperies fluttering.

"It is Jeena," Aurita suddenly murmured.

I knew Jeena quite well. Little sixteen-year-old virgin, like Aurita, save that her hair was not golden, but tinged with an auburn light. It was understood that she was to be Raalt's mate, when they were older. She saw our two boats clinging together, bobbing here on the waves, and her hand pressing her aerite's head guided the bird down to us. It swooped; and then with back-fluttering wings landed skillfully on top of our decked-over bow. Its cheeping voice was eager with recognition of Aurita and Raalt. And I thought then that the huge bird flung a glance at the little bow-cabin of our craft, with the feathers of its neck ruffing. Queer. But I forgot it with the shock of Jeena's first words.

"I was flying near the island of crime," she gasped at us. "They must have been building boats there secretly for a long time—"

"Boats—" Raalt echoed numbly.

"And they are getting ready to leave in them," Jeena finished. "Oh, Raalt, I was coming to the castle-cliff to tell you—"

Strange little counsel of war, here on the lake, our frail craft in the midst of the gathering crimson storm. Raalt, in his small boat was to go to Dreen, with Jeena winging ahead of him to spread the news. I would go on to the castle-cliff and with the young men there get the fifty projectors of the dissolving ray ready. Boats from Dreen would be sent to us.

The thought of those vibration-projectors with their five hundred-foot range heartened me. What had we to fear from a few hundred roaming criminals armed with knives perhaps, and with crude implements of agriculture? Or what to fear from rebellious Nonites?

But haste undoubtedly was necessary. Aurita now had refused to go back with her brother to Dreen. She insisted on going with me, and I yielded. Strange little Aurita. So gentle, but now she said suddenly:

"You, Jeena—it may be that my father will not realize that this is an emergency. He has very strange counsel. Jeena—you call the virgins together. As many as you can get. Have them take their aerites—and you fly with them to our meeting place. You understand?"

"Oh, yes—yes," Jeena agreed. Her eyes too were flashing. She drew herself erect, with her red-gold hair blowing in the wind and her young bosom panting under the bodice of her little brown-red druid-garment. "If there is to be—danger," she added, "the virgins will do their part."

"You tell them I will come there and join them," Aurita said. "Go now—and you, my brother, do your best—"

The red glare of lightning painted us as we separated—Raalt forcing his little boat forward and Jeena rising with her aerite and winging away. Then Aurita and I raised our small sail; our craft, caught by the wind, skimmed

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forward over the white-capped waves.

IT was some fifteen miles further to the castle-cliff. We made it in half an hour. The red-storm still seemed mostly below the horizon. The wind was puffy; the overhead, swift-flying clouds were low. With the lightning darting at intervals, the clouds were a great blood-red blanket, undulating close over us.

Then out of the red-murk ahead, the little castle-cliff loomed. It was a two hundred-foot rock-spire. Pitted and honeycombed with crevises and cave-openings. Fantastic little rock rising naked out of the water—ridged and terraced with multiple little needle-peaks dotting it. Around its base, where in places there was a little level apron of rocky ground, the lake was pounding. Red waves; crimson spray . . .

We landed in the lee of the rock where there was a small cove.

"The entrance to the laboratory is on the other side," Aurita said. "A little tunnel-passage there. My brother and the others fixed up two small grottos. You will see they have it well-equipped. Laboratory work that could not be done in our swaying tree-tops—"

We had tied up our boat and gone ashore. As we rounded the base of the rock, the wind and spray hit us, whipping away Aurita's words. And then I felt her clutch me.

"Oh, Lee—our boat—"

I turned. Our narrow little boat, with its sail raised, was heading out of the cove! A man's figure was in its stern, guiding it. As he reached the rougher water outside the cove we saw him stand up, heaving overboard one of the small outriding cylinder-pontoons, with its razor-keel to prevent side-slipping when sailing cross-wind. A big figure with a band around his forehead, holding his waving bushy hair.

It was Torm, Son of Caroh, the Chief Counsellor. He had been hiding in our bow-cabin, of course. No wonder the aerite-bird, scenting his presence, had seemed startled. He saw us on the shore and stood up, waving with a jibing gesture. My little heat-gun was in my hand, but he was far too distant to be within range.

The wind brought his ironic voice:

"The Earthman is a fool. Have nothing to do with him—you, my dear one—remember what I told you? The time would come when you—and all virgins—will do what the men command. That time has come—"

His mocking laugh ended his words. I gripped Aurita.

"What does he mean by that?"

"Oh, Lee, I never told you—Caroh has three sons. Torm, and two older brothers. And those other two—they have been banished. Kidnapers several years ago—"

How clearly I could understand it now! The wily Caroh, with his counsel of oppression for the Nonites—stirring them into rebellion! Two of his older sons on the island of crime? Of course he would plot to release them. And Torm—

"What does he mean," I insisted, "saying he told you all virgins must yield to the men?"

Her gaze would not meet mine.

"He—he did say that. Oh, I never told you, Lee—just before you came—he—he tried to force marriage upon me. But I did not love him. He said he was sorry—pleaded with me. So I forgave—"

"I see. That's enough, Aurita—I understand—" She was trembling as my arm held her against me.

OUT on the tumbled, blood-red water Torm with our boat slanted

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

over the waves toward the distant crime-island. To join his brothers. To lead them, of course, against the city of Dreen, where their father was waiting with the Nonites stirred into rebellion.

But what had we to fear, with the fifty projectors of the vibration ray which could dissolve human flesh? Those projectors must be assembled and taken to Dreen at once—mounted there before the Nonites could act, and before Torm and his men could attack . . .

We came to the small tunnel-mouth entrance. It was here that Aurita and I had seen that wounded young fellow staggering along the path. I stopped. His blood still showed on the rocks here. The curved knife-blade that had stabbed him was still lying here where Raalt had drawn it out of his side.

"Lee—look here—back at Dreen—"

Aurita called to me as I was examining the knife. She was standing at the cliff-top. I joined Aurita, and we peered. The tree-top horizon back toward Dreen was red and murky with the storm. No one, nothing, in sight there across the water. And then I saw a tiny blob of figure. A Nonite. And then another and another. Stalking forward, furtive in the foliage—pallid-white figures, like shifting ghosts stained crimson when the lightning glares painted them. Ghosts drenched in blood, stalking the city . . .

I drew the shuddering Aurita away.

"We must get inside—tell Raalt's companions all this—and get the projectors assembled—"

It was so silent in the dim passageway with the lash and roar of the storm, muffled and then gone. Silent, as death . . .

"Aurita—you stay behind me—"

With my small weapon in hand, slowly I advanced My heart was pounding. In the heavy silence here I could seem to hear it knocking against my ribs. And suddenly I gasped; and Aurita, half behind me, gave a low, startled cry.

The passageway had opened into a small grotto, which Raalt and his fellows had draped with grass rugs and mats on the floor. The characteristic low, rattan-like furniture of chairs and a table was here. And a dim form, lighted by the flickering brazier of tree-gum which still burned in its bracket on the wall.

A young man lying here. We bent over him. His throat was a crimson welter, almost severing his neck so that his head dangled askew. A young fellow not much older than Raalt. His dead eyes, still seeming to hold horror and the agony of death, stared mutely at us. But he wasn't the one whom Raalt had told us had been murdered! And then we saw another—and another . . .

FORGETFUL of ourselves, we rushed into the adjoining laboratory. Its stone workbenches were overturned; chairs were strewn; apparatus and tools of the work which had been carried on here, lay in a litter on the floor. Mute evidence of the struggle for life which Raalt's young companions had put up before they were overcome. And here in the wreckage the rest of them lay. One was decapitated. Another lay hacked, horrible with gore. Ghastly evidence of the ferocity of the attackers . . .

I pushed Aurita back . . .

And then we saw one burly fellow of the attackers dead here. From the crime island; his forehead was emblazoned with the crimson star, badge of his dishonor which had been branded there when he was convicted and exiled.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Grotto of death. Mingled with the aromatic smell of the resin torches there was the horrible stench of gore.

Every one of the young men scientists dead.

And the weapons were gone!

CHAPTER VI

Army of the Virgins

MAROONED. We ran out of the grottos, back to the storm-lashed rock shore. Alone here on the island, with what bloody events about to break forth back in Dreen I could only shudderingly imagine. Baffled, helpless rage swept me. What was going on back there? I thrust away the weird pictures my strained imagination conjured.

"Oh, Lee, how will any boat get to us from Dreen, in this storm? What will we do now? Those crimson-star men from the crime-island—"

The wind whipped at her words and flung them away into the murk. The storm now had broken into full intensity. For how long, I have no idea, we huddled among the rocks, gazing with awe at this wrath of nature. Weird, fantastic scene indeed.

The wind, slanting at us from the direction of Dreen, now was a steady roar. Rain was falling—great sheets of driving droplets that slanted almost horizontal. Overhead, purple and orange-green cloud-vapors had lowered, racing so close that the spires of the little castle-cliff split them as like a turgid purple river the vapors flowed past. The lake was a seething mass of waves now—white-caps with the spume blown from them to mingle with the rain.

Momentarily there had been no lightning flares. The scene was a deep turgid purple. All but the water of the lake. The waves there had stirred an opalescence in the water. The flying spume shimmered iridescent—a million-million pearl-drops pelting us. And then the lightning came again—a seemingly horizontal flash from one horizon to the other. A sustained bolt, this time. Through what seemed an eternity it hung like a giant, blood-stained scimiter arching over our heads.

Awesome glare of glorious splendor. The clouds seemed dripping blood—every rain droplet glistening crimson, mingling with the opalescence of the spume. The sky was crimson—the lake suddenly a sea of gore. Ghastly premonitory symbol.

Beside me the crouching little figure of Aurita, her wet brown drapes plastered to the lithe young lines of her body—her golden tresses tossing in the wind—suddenly I saw her as though soaked in blood, so that I held her closer, shuddering.

And then, with the eerie crackling thunderclap rolling away, engulfed by the storm-roar, the red sword over us melted and was gone. The deep purple gloom settled here again, like a tragic mask to hide the blood that had been spilled.

"I think that was the worst of it," Aurita said. "The red-storms usually do not last long."

Another interval, and then I could feel that the wind was lessening. Then the rain ceased, with an orange glow on the rifted clouds and the red lightnings again at the horizon, growling and muttering.

"THEY ought to be able to send that boat to us from Dreen, starting about now," I suggested.

"Yes," she agreed.

It seemed obvious to me that the storm, a disadvantage to us, had also been a disadvantage to Torm and his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

men. But there were some three hundred of them, there on the crime-island. They had the projectors of the dissolving vibration-ray, of course. Doubtless they had landed on the castle-cliff, just about the time Raalt left, so that he was the only survivor there. They had boats now at the crime-island, as Jeena had told us. And with the rays, they would come to attack Dreen. I could picture those rays, hurled into the little forest city.

"The storm will have delayed them," I was saying to Aurita. "And now, if we can get away from here—"

To do what? But Aurita saw it perhaps more clearly than I did.

"They must not reach Dreen," she said grimly. "And it is the Virgins who will stop them—kill them."

Grim, set little face. The red-purple of the stormlight made her slant eyes deep turgid pools. Miserable commentary upon mankind, that now these events, all man-created, could make gentle little Aurita thirst for blood, with her lips pressed together and her fists clenched as she envisaged how she would try to kill. Instinct of self-preservation. It can make a killer of anyone, of anything that lives . . .

Then the storm broke away. The rifted clouds thinned, gloriously painted orange and green until that too faded and patches of silver stars were showing—starlight that gleamed to glorify the sullen spent waves of the lake; and gleamed on the little pools of water here in the rock-hollows beside us.

Calm and quiet beauty after the storm. That was nature's way. But our storm of human conflict wasn't over. It was just beginning. If only this could be an omen of its end for Aurita and me . . .

"No boat coming yet?" I murmured.

"No. I don't see any."

I wondered if Torm had been able to reach the crime-island, or if the storm had engulfed him. Fervently I hoped that it had.

"Lee—could that be an aerite?" Aurita said presently.

In the sky, off toward Dreen where now the clouds were only a thin stream of opal vapor, a little dot had appeared. At first we thought it might be one of the bird-like aerites, winging toward us. But then as it enlarged, it showed as a flat, squarish blob, wingless. At an altitude of only a hundred feet above the lake, it came sliding through the air toward us . . .

My volplane! It was an oblong platform some fifteen by twenty feet, built of wood into which I had erected some of the mechanisms and segments of the anti-gravity plates from the wrecked Blaine-rocket in which I had arrived. Artificial gravity-repulsion, enough to raise it or hold it poised, and with electronic little rocket streams to give it lateral motion. The faint violet streams were visible now, like a tiny spreading comet-tail behind it.

THEN as it slowed and lowered, we saw a man's figure lying prone on it, clinging to the hand-holds I had devised. And piles of racked silver-gleaming objects were stacked beside him, lashed with thongs to the platform's planks.

It was Raalt. He had, upon occasion, helped me build the volplane. He knew how to operate it. I held my breath now as he waved to us, checking his advance almost over us, with a dozen of the little violet gas-streams giving the platform a circular rotation. And then with gravity attraction, he was descending to the rocks near us.

"Easy!" I shouted. "Don't smash it, Raalt!"

"Why should I?" he called back. His grinning boyish face, flushed with his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

excitement, projected for a moment over the platform edge. And then he landed, with not too much of a thump and no damage done.

"Knew I could do it," he laughed. "This thing is just grand, Lee—"

But his laugh faded when we told him that there was no one here but ourselves—and the dead, his murdered fellow-workers. And that the ray-projectors were gone.

"Why—why—" he gasped. "They're going to send a boat here from Dreen, but that's no use now. Why—then those crimson-star men can attack us with our own weapons! Rays to dissolve human flesh—used upon the city of Dreen—"

"Yes," I agreed. "They've got boats there at the crime-island—probably starting now—"

It numbed him, and then he gasped, "That damned Torm. You, my sister, I always told you he was dangerous for a girl to be with. Damned dirty villain—"

"Right," I agreed. "But that doesn't help us now. You arranged for the young men to organize in Dreen—"

"Yes, surely I did. Father always has two hundred—what you on Earth, as you tell me, call a police force. He will have a thousand others added to them within an hour or two. Jeena is getting the girls to fly to your meeting place," he added to Aurita. "Some have got their knives—but I thought I would bring some more, and take you to join them."

His face had gone white as what we really were facing now dawned on him. He gripped me.

"Lee, I thought—the girls meeting with their aerites—that was a good idea, because mostly it would get them out of danger in Dreen. But now—but now, these crime men coming with our projectors—why my God, if they reach Dreen—"

"But they will not!" Aurita cried. "My girls will stop them—who else?"

If only I had had some warning of this! If only men could fly on the aerites! But that was impossible. If I had had more time, perhaps to duplicate my gravity-plates and little rocket streams, so that I could have constructed a dozen of these platforms, with young men upon them, to attack the boats of the oncoming enemy! Futile thoughts!

AURITA and I lay with Raalt on the volplane. I took the controls, raised it off the apron of rocks there by the little castle-cliff. And at an altitude of a hundred feet or so we slid smoothly through the air, heading for the Virgins' meeting place. It was partly toward Dreen, but back from the lake where the forest frayed out and there was only naked desolation of the barrenlands where animals of a dozen weird kinds roamed, feeding upon each other, and upon slithering, frightened reptiles.

Weird, tumbled landscape of glowering desolation. Grey-black, porous rocks, burned and pitted as though by a Titan's blowtorch. Occasionally as we passed, slithering things were visible down there in the silvery darkness.

Steadily the wild landscape rose into terraced jagged hills. The Virgins' gathering place was at the top of a black crystalline peak—giant triangular shaft that rose some three hundred feet above the surrounding wastes. A table-rock top surmounted it—grey-black marble-like surface, with a ring of great boulders around its depressed center.

We landed smoothly. A dozen or more of the girls were already here, with their huge aerite-birds docilely among them. And now as we unpacked

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the crescent knife-blades and the slings to hurl them, other girls on the great birds were arriving from Dreen. They came singly and in little groups, for a moment cricling overhead, with the *cheep* of the aerites mingling with the girls' cries of greeting as they swooped down and landed.

Little Jeena was here, her face flushed with excitement, her bosom heaving under her brown-red bodice, her red-gold hair in a sheen glinting with starlight as it enveloped her.

"Four hundred of our girls," she told Aurita and me excitedly. "They are coming."

Weird, starlit eyrie, this gathering place of the Virgins, up here in the silvery night. The aerites were bringing them now in clusters, circling, with girlish, excited voices calling down; and then the back-flapping beating wings of the giant birds as they alighted. Soon the rocks echoed with the girls' chatter and like dogs the fluffy brown and green aerites caught the excitement, standing with flapping wings and excited bird-calls.

I STOOD with Aurita, silently watching. Some of the girls had brought slings and knives; Raalt and Jeena were distributing them to the others. My heart welled with queerly mixed emotions. Frail, beautiful little creatures, these Virgins of the Forest People. Excited now. Enthusiastic. Girding themselves for battle. Laughing as though it were a game. But there was death ahead, for them . . .

And nothing that I could do to stop them. Nor could I even dare want to stop them. The thought of the city of Dreen assailed by the men from the crime-island with their rays—the helpless old men and women, the mothers, the children there—that was a greater horror.

And it must have been that Aurita was sharing my thoughts, my emotions. For suddenly with a leap that carried her twenty feet from me, she mounted a butte-like rock, facing the chattering, assembled girls, with her arms flung up for silence.

Amazing, this transformation of the gentle little druid-girl I had thought I knew! Like a Valkyrie she stood, up there in the starlight. Transfigured. Every beautiful line of her was tense, dominant, commanding. And then she spoke:

"Virgins of Dreen—we have been always for gentleness, for love. Always have we wanted to help the Nonites, for we know they too, are human. Never would any one of us raise a hand in violence against another human. Unthinkable! But it isn't unthinkable any longer. From the island of crime the crimson-star men of crime have dared to escape. They have stolen the ray-weapons.

"And the men of crime now will turn those weapons against our city. They will rule our Forest People. Oh, you know what that means for you and for me. You know their purpose. And to achieve it they will kill. Your mother to be killed. Your father, and mine—and your little sisters and brothers . . .

"And so we must stop them. A virgin now, for the first time, must kill. That is a terrible thing. But if we do not, what surely will happen is worse."

Battle cry of the Valkyries. She sounded it suddenly—a little throaty call that must have sprung within her, inspired by the blood of some remote ancestress who fought and killed for her mate. And four hundred girlish voices echoed it.

Battle cry of the Virgins. It welled up into the starlight—voices of purity who would fight to keep it unsullied. Who would fight and kill with primi-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tive ferocity to save those they loved. And who would die, still fighting and unafraid.

THEY were all assembled here now. Then with slings in hand, with a dozen of the curved blades hung at their waists, they mounted the aerites. And rose in little groups, circling overhead.

Raalt and I, grim and tense, watched them until they were all aloft. Then we mounted the volplane. At least a hundred extra slings and knife-blades were piled beside us. Slowly, with gathering speed, the little anti-gravity platform rose. The girls, led by Aurita, who now wore a garment of flaming red—their leader, and behind her Jeena, were circling, milling, forming into the small flying groups as they had planned.

Frail, fluttering little army, with only its bravery for its chief weapon . . .

I met Raalt's grim gaze; and suddenly he burst out:

"Oh, if only we had never revived that damnable ray—"

How often that has been said in the recent history of our own Earth! Science for the benefit of mankind! With what ghastly mockery the lust of man has turned it into exactly the opposite! So often indeed, that one may truly wonder whether Earth would not be better without that science of which our age so proudly boasts!

I swung our volplane ahead of the four hundred girls. Behind us they were flying now in forty little groups of ten, strung out in a double line, with Aurita leading them.

What a picture she made, astride the aerite, arm upraised in the signal to advance!

Within a few minutes we had crossed the barrenlands and were out over the starlit lake. I swung higher. Five hundred feet; then seven or eight hundred—surely beyond range of the enemy projectors. At the lake I turned, not toward Dreen, but toward the castle-cliff, where far to the left an arm of the lake opened into the big forty-mile lagoon which held the island of crime.

The volplane was flying faster now. With the groups of girls strung out in a single line behind us, we advanced to battle.

CHAPTER VII

Blood of Zonara

RAALT and I crouched on the volplane, planning the conduct of our attack. We had already been able to scan all of the lake down to Dreen. There was no sign of the enemy vessels; it was obvious that they had not yet come into this arm of the lake.

We swept on, until presently the little castle-cliff came into view. Starlight glimmered on it like a silver halo. To the left here the lake bent in a sweeping wide curve, opening into a big irregularly circular basin, in the center of which, some twenty miles further, the crime-island lay, a little dark dot against the silvery surface.

"Those girls should stay back," Raalt said presently. He gestured to where two of the groups of ten girls had urged their aerites forward so that now, one group on each side, they were passing us.

Weird sight, those two little squads, seeming trying to race with us the huge brown birds with their great spread of flapping green wings were stretching their necks and big gray-blue bills forward. The girls, astride them, were slim brown blobs, with pink-white legs pressing close into the birds' brown feathered body. The wind rushed past,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fluttered the girls' brownish drapes and flowing hair.

I stood half erect, gripping one of the volplane's hand-holds to steady myself in the rush of wind. Close behind us Aurita was flying. Her red garment set her apart like a red-storm lightning flash.

"Bring those girls back," I shouted.

Her waved hand answered me; she urged her aerite to greater speed, herded off the two groups, sent them behind us . . .

And then we sighted the enemy boats. They were just leaving the crime island. The storm undoubtedly had delayed them; and probably also the assembling and erecting of the projectors. We saw them now—a boat coming out from the island, and then another.

I rose higher, swung off to one side with the girls obediently following. For ten minutes or so we waited. Then another boat came; and then a fourth.

My signal to Aurita and to Jeena held the girls back; and at eight hundred or a thousand foot altitude, I sent the volplane skimming forward so that we passed almost directly over the little line of boats. Four of them, and no more seemed coming.

They were crude wooden affairs, each some thirty feet long, wide and cumbersome. Open boats, not decked over. We could make out the black dots of the men crowding them; some seventy-five in each, doubtless. A line of them at the gunwales, manning long sweeps, like oars, sent the heavy craft slowly forward.

I TURNED us back to rejoin the girls. The boats were some five hundred feet apart. As we passed back over the leader, a little pencil ray of orange light stabbed at us. The first shot.

It fell far short. It was a thin narrow beam, certainly no bigger than a man's arm. It darted up, held for perhaps ten seconds and then faded.

"The beam cannot spread?" I murmured to Raalt.

"No. Just a thin stab, like that one. After five hundred feet, I think it would do very little damage."

That at least was in our favor. It would not be easy to hit one of the fluttering birds, several hundred feet away, with that narrow beam. Nor to hold it on the shifting target so that its lethal effect would be felt.

I summoned Aurita now. My plan of battle was fairly clear in my mind. We would have to attack, of course. Without that, the enemy boats would go on down the lake until they could assemble and bring their rays upon Dreen. There was a bottleneck in the lake a few miles beyond the turn—a narrow passage only two or three hundred feet wide, with the lake widening at both ends of its half mile length. The jungle pressed close to the edges of the narrow strait. When the boats got in there, particularly if we could get them bunched, that was our best time for attack.

I explained it to Aurita. With the boats clustered, we would have a far bigger target for the descending, whirling knife-blades.

She nodded eagerly.

"Yes, I understand. I will tell Jeena—and we will tell all of them."

"You are to keep out of range until the boats reach there," I directed. "And then—well, I'll give the signal. You'll see the volplane going down."

"Yes. Very well, Lee. I shall tell them."

"Look!" Raalt interjected. "One of the knives—"

A girl, from up here at our high altitude, had sent one of the blades descending. Shining, whirling little thing,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

its swift rotation making it look like a round blob. It skimmed down, like a boomerang in a big crescent arc, heading to one side and turning. The starlight glinted on it as it skimmed, fell.

It missed the leading boat by a hundred feet or more and fell with a little splash into the lake. In the heavy night-silence, the men's shouts of derision floated up to us.

"Tell the girls not to do that," I ordered sharply. "Just a waste of blades and we have not too many."

AURITA left us, her aerite winging away to join Jeena.

For another interval we hovered, high up. It would be nearly an hour perhaps before the boats reached that bottleneck strait. I presently called to Jeena as she passed, ordering the girls to wait here, to follow the boats. Then Raalt and I skimmed the volplane for Dreen. As though with a premonition . . .

Certainly there was nothing now that we could do for Dreen, save to attack this oncoming enemy . . .

We passed high over the little tree-top city, skimming in a great circle. Starlight was down there, and now the crescent Earth was rising, mellowing the forest-top with its yellow glow. Prone on the volplane, Raalt and I stared down.

Ghastly sight! On one of the swaying, bridge-like little streets, Nonites were running—pallid ghostly shapes, stained yellow by the Earthlight. Nonites with harvest tools, like swords glinting in the Earthshine.

I saw one of them reach a little thatched, moundshaped house, with the lounging platform before it. A woman huddled there—a woman in terror holding a little girl against her. The frenzied Nonite's sword flashed, with a cutting sweep as one would harvest grain in a field. Then it was a sword dripping with crimson as the woman fell.

The little girl, screaming, tried to run. With a pounce the Nonite seized her; whirled her; flung the child's body down through the foliage—little blob falling to the dark ground far underneath . . .

Ghastly horror. In this little section of Dreen, the Nonites everywhere were running—hunting the terrified people in the houses; hurling them from bridges, from vine-ladders to which they were clinging.

In the silence the agonized screams floated up. Screams mingled now with other faint weird sounds, even more ghastly. The lusting voices of men filled with the frenzy of murder. Like vultures they were gathered down there on the dark ground. There was a place where for an instant we could see them —milling formless blobs of horror, eager for more victims for their swords.

We swept on. I saw another section where the young men of Dreen were fighting, groups of them lunging at the lustful, now-murderous Nonites. Pressing the Nonites back, cutting through them, fighting their way forward . . .

"Oh Lee, our home—look down there —my father—"

I HAD dropped the volplane lower. Close ahead of us, no more than a hundred feet down, the big dwelling of old Ptyah lay surrounded by its spreading tree-branches. Nonites were in the platform-garden in front—a group of Nonites standing waving their weapons, shouting at old Ptyah who had appeared in the doorway. Their Ruler, so that momentarily they were afraid to advance and could only stand their ground, brandishing their weapons while they hurled invectives.

It was just an instant glimpse as Raalt and I floated almost overhead. Then in that second, behind Ptyah in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the doorway, Caroh appeared. Wily old Counsellor—the Nonites quite evidently now thought him their friend. A knife glinted in his hand as he jumped. Raalt and I both shouted at once; frantically we were fitting a blade into our slings.

But too late. Caroh's knife sank into Ptyah's back. He fell. My blade whirled down at almost the same instant. For that second I held my breath. By luck doubtless, my aim was true. The whirling blade struck Caroh's neck; he fell, with his head dangling askew.

All in a few ghastly seconds. Our platform swept past. Looking back we could see where the Nonites in Ptyah's garden now were being attacked by arriving men.

Poor Raalt for a moment, with that vision of his murdered father still before him, crouched numbed. There was nothing that I could say. Only with my hand on his shoulder could I let him know how I felt.

I headed us back up the lake. There was so little that we would have done, back there in Dreen. Our task lay ahead. I could only pray that the young men of the Forest People would beat off the Nonites. It seemed that perhaps they would. And now, if this other enemy could be turned back . . .

The girls, as I had commanded, were still circling at a thousand feet. And the first of the four boats, still in a line, was just entering the bottleneck strait. I called Aurita, warning Raalt not to tell her what we had seen in Dreen. Surely at least for now, I could spare her that.

"You take half the girls," I directed. "Twenty squads. Fly low in front of that first boat. They will think you are about to attack, and they may stop and wait for it. But keep well away—more than five hundred feet. Have Jeena, with the other girls, press toward the rear boat—try and drive it forward, you see?"

So that we might get them bunched in the bottleneck. Raalt and I held the volplane in the center as the girls divided, swept down in great fluttering arcs. It evidently startled the enemy. A few futile stabs of their rays darted at the descending girls. I could see the men at the sweeps in the first boat stop their efforts.

And then I swooped the volplane. The first attack.

WE dropped downward, heading at the last boat. It increased its speed. Its ray stabbed at us as we came within range; missed, and then we were over it. A ray-beam came up, struck our bottom and for ten seconds clung. No great damage. There was the smell of chlorite gases; and the queer fetid odor of rotting wood.

In that swift swoop down and up again, Raalt and I hurled several of the whirling knives. Most of them missed, but one or two went into the rear boat. We saw one of the men fall, as the whirling blade cut into him. A confusion down there . . .

Then we were up again out of range. The tactics had partially worked. The first boat had stopped; the last one, under the volplane's attack and with the squads of girls behind it, seeming about to swoop on it, had frantically hastened its advance. Almost in a little group, all within the space of a few hundred feet, the four boats were bunched in the bottleneck.

And then I gave the signal for the general attack. It started with a great flutter of the huge aerites' wings; grim shouts of the girls urging them forward and downward.

Awe-inspiring sight, that swoop into battle. But soon it was a thing of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

horror. Little squads of ten, they dipped down and up again, hurling their whirling knives at the bottom of the arc. Then the orange beams of the pencil rays were stabbing into them.

I shall never forget the sinking of my heart as I saw the first girl struck. She had avoided several of the stabs in her swoop, and had discharged her knife, at close range. But as she was rising, the narrow orange beam struck her, and for almost all its eternity of ten seconds, miraculously it clung. Ten seconds while the aerite fluttered. I had a vision of her there on its back, clinging . . .

Suddenly a ghastly leprous vision—part of the bird and the girl's white-limbed body abruptly were melting. Ghastly, fused, leprous thing, bird and girl, rotted blob that in those seconds was falling, turning end over end until it struck the water with a little splash, mercifully to hide it.

And there were others. A ray that cut through a whole squad of ten, some falling, others with the bird flopping sidewise, struggling drunkenly with one wing. One or two others sagging down, flopping into the water. A girl down there, freed of her wounded bird, was swimming . . .

THE wind whistled past our ears as Raalt and I swooped the volplane. Lying prone on it, with our heads projecting a little, with our weapons ready for the bottom of our swooping arc, it was impossible to see much of what was going on. We hurled our knives into one of the crowded boats; I circled us low and we came back, hurled again; and again. The rays stabbed at us from underneath. The fumes of the chlorite gases and the rotting smell of the dissolving wood of our under-planks at times was choking. Would the rays dissolve through? Undoubtedly so, if enough of them struck in the same place.

But the hurled, whirling knife-blades were finding their marks. We had a glimpse of one of the boats, crowded with men, with a dozen or so of the little projectors mounted among them. There was confusion down there. Men hacked by the knives, falling among their comrades. Several of the projectors had been smashed as the men fell.

At the gunwales, the men with the long sweeps had given it up now. Some of the sweeps were floating overboard. The boat was drifting; the current in the bottleneck was carrying it toward the jungle-like bank.

Already that boat was in distress. We took another swoop at it and then rose. The end of the first attack.

Most of the girls were struggling up out of range now. My heart went cold. The girls were still trying to keep into squads. But they were broken; fifty girls at least were gone, out of our four hundred—leprous ghastly figures down in the water; others struggling in the air. One or two, with the girl perhaps realizing herself dying and her aerite unharmed, were winging back toward Dreen.

My anguished gaze sought Aurita—she was up here, safe; and so was Jeena. Both of them shouted at us as they fluttered past. They ignored any possible command from us. Again with the girls following them, they swooped.

The horror went on. A minute, five minutes, or even half an hour, I have no way of saying. Every passing moment seemed to bring an eternity of things terrible, indescribable.

One corner of our volplane had melted, rotted away now. Much more of that and the gravity-plates would be disorganized. Two of our rocket-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

streams were dead. As we rose from our swoops I could see more of the girls, wounded, struggling away. A dozen or more had wavered off and dropped into the nearby forest. Nonites were lurking there now, waiting for what might come to them . . .

But we were making progress. Two of the boats had gone ashore. It seemed that in one, most of the men were strewn in a weltering mass. No shots were coming from it. On another boat, fire had broken out—one of the projectors, wrecked, had short-circuited, killing all the men near it. The others were struggling in chaos. The third boat was fighting, with the girls still swooping at it. The fourth was making away toward Dreen.

"We'll go after it, Raalt—"

"Yes," he agreed. "Oh Lee, look—over us—"

SEVERAL times girls had come to us to get more of the knife-blades. We had no more than twenty or thirty left here. And suddenly now a wounded aerite was fluttering—an aerite and girl. Then the bird, with one of its wings gone, wavered sidewise and the girl dropped off, fell six or eight feet and landed beside us.

Jeena . . .

Raalt gave an agonized cry and threw himself down to hold her. Poor little Jeena. An arm, and one of her legs seared . . . She lay pallid in Raalt's arms, just barely conscious but still she was trying to smile as she gazed up at him.

"We—we're winning, Raalt?"

"Yes—yes, of course, Jeena dear—"

I hurled the volplane at that escaping boat. Its open interior was a welter; more than half of its men lying strewn. The others were manning the sweeps, frantically urging it forward. It seemed to have only one projector still in action. A big man was standing there in the stern with it, training it on us.

Torm! The starlight, Earthlight and the flames from the burning boat illumined him. His blood-smeared face was grinning. I poised us, ready for the final swoop.

Then over us there was a flutter. Aurita dropped beside us, and her wounded mount wavered away. Aurita, thank God, still unharmed.

"I need some knives," she gasped. "I can call another aerite."

"We haven't any knives to spare." I gripped her. How could I be blamed that now I could not let her start off again into that turmoil of death, by trick of fate so much more dangerous for her, than for me, here protected by the volplane planks.

"You stay here," I said. "We've got them beaten, by God we have."

Her strained white face went into a twisted grin.

"Yes, we have."

One of the wrecked boats was jammed against the shore. I glanced back. The girls had ceased their attack now; what was left of them had struggled up and were poised overhead.

"Jeena needs you," I murmured to Aurita. She had not seen Jeena. With a little cry she threw herself down; and Raalt came to lie beside me.

And then we swooped at Torm.

Skimming low over the water, I slid the volplane directly at him. There was a second when his orange beam sizzled close over our heads. Then Raalts' hurled blade went into his side and mine seemed to strike his throat where his lusting, murderous blood spurted in a crimson torrent.

The volplane swept close over him. Then we turned to look back. He had fallen. Then with a last desperate frenzy he staggered erect. His smashed

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

projector was darting flames of electronic fire at him. For an instant he poised on the gunwale, gazing at us with an arm waving as though still trying to hurl defiance. Then his body pitched overboard. There was a splash. A monstrous rotting thing in the water for an instant. And then there was nothing . . .

AFTERMATH of battle. Return of the victorious army. As my mind goes back to it now, really I have little heart to describe it—that pitiful little army slowly winging its way back to Dreen. In war, even the victor is vanquished. How true that is! Broken little army, to struggle back now and celebrate its victory. We were able to rescue a few of the girls, but even so, a scant hundred and fifty were left to realize that they had won.

Nor need I describe with any detail what since has happened to me here in Dreen. The rebellion of the Nonites was checked by the young men of the Forest People, that terrible night. The Nonites realize now how they were tricked.

Jeena recovered from her injuries. Fortunately the ray had held her only a second, and her skin only seared by its dissolving qualities. In a few months—for she was a long time recovering from the shock—she was wholly well, and more beautiful than ever. Perhaps more beautiful even than Aurita, but I will never admit it fully. She and Raalt are very happy; married now.

Aurita and I, too, are mated. With Raalt we rule Dreen. A new era is dawning for us all, we hope. Our ray-weapons have been destroyed; the Nonites now are our equals, happy as we. Food is more abundant; soon we hope that we can build cities on the ground. A new era. I wonder if that really is progress toward human happiness . . . ?

I have written this narrative; I shall try now to wait my chance, and launch a little cylinder I have built, hoping that some time this may reach Earth, so that my dear grandparents may understand the mystery of me. I hope they forgive me. It is all for the best. Surely this will show that my very strange destiny brought me here, and I am happy . . .

LEE BLAINE.

DR. ROBERT BLAINE, astronomer, looker up from the tiny flames of the embering log in the fireplace.

"He is happy, Mary," he whispered. "We would not have him return, would we?"

His wife picked up the crystal that mirrored Lee Blaine's smiling face and looked into it fondly.

"No," she said softly. "He has a perfect world there—and he will make of it what mankind has failed to make here on Earth . . ."

Reflectively Dr. Blaine picked up the other crystal. As he looked into its depths and into the flashing, laughing eyes of Aurita, the Druid girl of Zonara, his fingers reached out and took the sheaf of maps and mathematical calculations that proved the existence and location of Earth's second moon. For a moment he fingered them, then he tossed them atop the glowing log.

"Robert," Mary Blaine said. "What are you doing . . ?"

Dr. Blaine handed her the crystal in his hand.

"Look," he said softly. "Do you think an old man like me can place such a fleeting thing as personal vindication for a discovery before her happiness and Lee's? It is better that the newspapers laugh at me. Better that

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mankind does not believe Zonara exists; so that Lee and Aurita can keep their paradise. Then *we* will have the last laugh, eh, darling?"

She placed a hand on his white head and ran her fingers fondly through his hair.

"Yes, Robert," she said softly. "We will."

And they both watched while the flames licked away the last trace of proof that 440,000 miles away in space was a world where man's hate had been obliterated.

« THE MOST PERFECT RACE »

BY GUY FAULDES

IN spite of the steady progress of science and sociology in the world today, we still find it quite impossible to conceive of a race living in a utopian world. It is impossible to imagine, for example, a world in which dishonesty would be nonexistent merely because no person could be dishonest. It is equally impossible to imagine a race so sublimated to the good of all, that the individual passions of envy, jealousy, anger, and greed were unheard of.

However, such a world exists. And it exists here and now, living alongside our own world. We find it in the utopian scheme of living upon which the insect world thrives. So perfect has been the civilization that tiny insects have set up beside our own imperfect mode of existence, that scientists have been forced to conclude that we human beings will arrive at an equal civilization status with insects only after millions of more years are spent in our development!

Probably the most carefully studied and most civilized race in the insect world is that of the ant. By comparing ant life to our own existence, and on our own standards, we are more easily able to get a picture of its existence.

On this premise—comparing the ants to us—we can visualize a society of workers diligently laboring night and day, building bridges, constructing tunnels, engaged in agriculture, horticulture, and caring for all sorts of domestic animals. These workers are protected in their hard and ceaseless toil by an army of soldiers. Now, in our own society, we would expect the workers to be both men and women, and the soldiers to be male. Not so, however, in the ant world. Both the workers and the soldiers are female!

But before any males reading this snap their fingers in unholy glee at the thought of a civilization in which such tiresome duties as work and fighting are taken care of by the female of the species, let us add that the male ant lives under circumstances which are far from delightful.

Like a Broadway impresario, the male ant's task is to produce. However, unlike Broadway impresarios, he doesn't produce plays. His task is to attend to the propagation of the race. Aside from this task in duty to the ant society, the male is treated indifferently

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by the female dominated world in which he lives. During his short life span his other jobs are menial and minor. His lack of stature in the society of his kind is due, in great measure, to the fact that there are far more female of the species than there are of the male.

To get back to the important cogs in ant civilization—the women—we see that the workers in the insect scheme of existence have other tasks than those of construction and cultivation. They are also called on to take care of all the young. When you consider that the ant children are so delicate that the slightest changes in temperature may kill them, and that they have to be constantly carried from one place to another, this task in itself seems staggering. However, there are other duties to the workers in the ant kingdom. One of the most primary is the tending of live stock. And believe it or not, the ants employ plenty of domesticated animals in their service—584 in all!

Now all of this makes the day a pretty full one for Lady Ant, even if she is boss of her civilization. Consequently, in this superutopian mode of living, it becomes necessary to regiment sleep to its proper place. Of course, this, too, has been attended to.

The workers take their sleep in shifts, never napping for even a second longer than necessary. And as for the matter of food and drink, individual desires in this respect once more take the pattern of the civilization and give ground to a scheme that makes the most good for the greatest number. It is interesting to note that, in rationing of food supplies, there is no selfishness or grubbing in the ant world. Each ant has its share of food and, even when there isn't a great deal of it, will want no more than its alloted portion.

Only those ants whose particular task is to serve as Mothers are allowed all they want in the way of food, drink, and sleep. These ants have a preeminent position in the civilization, and receive the attention and care of favored queens. It is seen to that they are most plentifully supplied in every necessity of life, even to the finest housing places.

There is no murder in the ant world, for there is no need of it. Each ant, like a character from Shangri La, suppresses her individual wants to the benefit of the others. None ever get out of hand, and there is no such thing as revolt in this civilization.

Now, before you begin to ask us, "Is *every* ant kingdom so conducted?" or, "Are *all* ant civilizations so perfect?", let us stop to remind you that this streamlined manner of perfection in living is found only in the higher types of ants. Like our present day civilization, the ant world possesses its yet unconverted barbarians. However, like our own world, we can consider the best in any civilization as representing the attainments of that species. There are bushmen and savages in the ant world. There are untutored, wild and woolly tribes crouching in their jungles just the same as there are in our own. But just as we intend to one day bring the poor benighted heathen into our mode of life and manner of thinking, so do the advanced ant civilizations strive for the betterment of their species as a whole. They're a progressive bunch.

However, before we extol them to the point of utter sociological and moral perfection, we have to admit that they've taken one of man's greatest weaknesses and most long-lived stupidities into their manner of life. They carry on wars outside their own borders; wars just as costly, just as vicious, and probably just as pointless as our own!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WANDERER OF

By EANDO BINDER

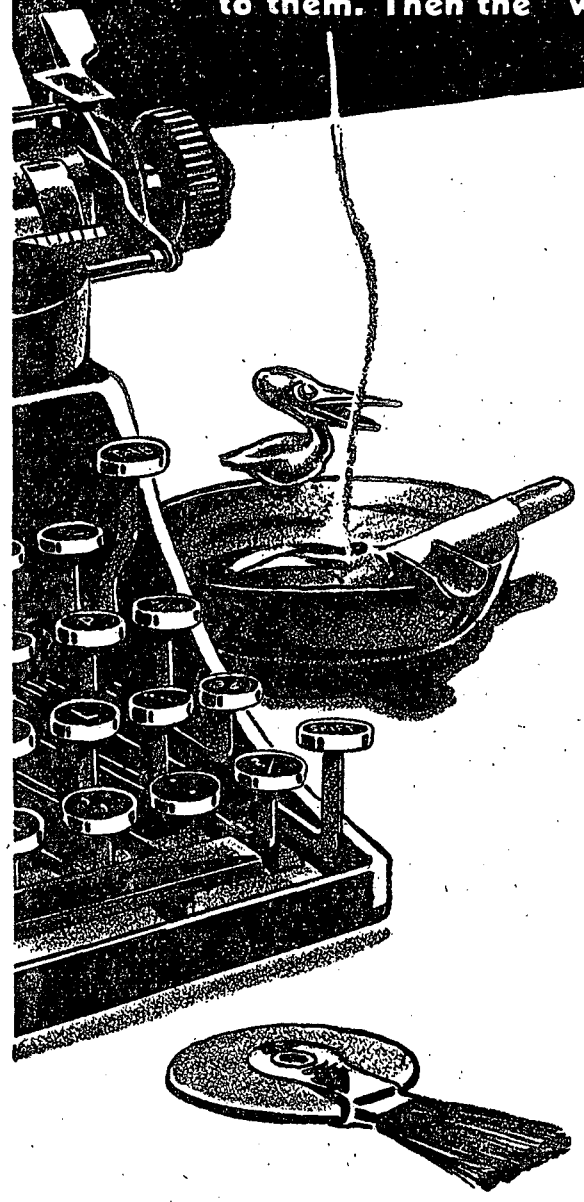
Robt. Fuqua—

Aldic jumped on the keys while Boro sat on the shift key

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LITTLE LAND

The Little People had to reward these two Big People, but to do so meant great danger to them. Then the "wanderer" volunteered—



THOUGH tired and weak from a day of it, Jim Harvey continued to sit on his camp-stool and dab at the paint-board on the easel with his brushes. It was near dusk.

Somehow, the day had been perfect and the new setting he had found seemed exceptionally inspirational. A shaded grotto ahead, with a crystal-clear brook murmuring through it, whispering of things mysterious. If only he could get it down as his soul saw it! Around him stretched the untouched wildwood of the upper Catskills. The low peaks in all directions were crowned by the flame of sunset. It was sylvan, idyllic.

A scene of fairyland, Jim Harvey mused. He could almost feel little eyes on him. Not just those of a rabbit nibbling in a briar-patch, or a slinking weasel. Perhaps the canny little eyes of an elf, or brownie. If he looked quick enough, he might see their little forms lurking behind tree-stumps and toadstools. And if he came here at night some time, in full moonlight, he could paint in the Dance of the Fairies, there in that glade. . .

He clucked his tongue. His second childhood already, before he was thirty? He laughed silently at himself as he stroked in the brook with silver-grey water color.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The stroke broke off at a sudden noise. The crackling of underbrush shattered the twilight serenity. Harvey turned and saw a bear coming toward him from the side.

Startled, he jumped up. Was the bear attacking him? Bears never attacked grown people, except in rare cases of goaded anger or starvation. The he relaxed. It was a half-grown bear, probably a second-year cub, its first independent season away from its mother. It chased something small and twinkling, unaware of the man. A rabbit or wounded bird or chipmunk. . . .

Harvey strained to see, in the dusk.

He gasped suddenly. Were his eyes playing him tricks? It was a little man! A tiny, human-proportioned figure about six inches high. It was scuttling across the clearing for the sanctuary of the nearest briar-patch. But the bear was right behind, gaining, intent on gobbling up the tempting morsel.

Jim Harvey acted instinctively. A dead branch lay at his feet. He grabbed it up, ran forward to intercept, and cracked the bear over the skull sharply. Taken unawares, the bear's gait broke. Its prey skipped on, into the briar-patch, melting into shadow. It was safe.

Snarling, the bear turned on Harvey. Its teeth bared ferociously. A full-grown bear might have attacked. But after a growling appraisal of its new and sudden assailant, the cub loped off.

"Sorry, old man," Harvey laughed. "Hope you find another dinner. But I couldn't let you—Good Lord!"

The laugh broke off. It suddenly occurred to him why he had interfered. Because he *believed* he had really seen a little man! A pixie, a woodland sprite —one of the mythical Little People. Trick of the shadows, of course. Or the effect of the fairy-like setting, and his own previous wool-gathering.

And yet . . .

TEN minutes later he turned from his search of the bushes into which the little form had scuttled, finding nothing. He packed his paints and brushes, slung his easel and sketches under his arm, and left. He looked back once, shaking his head.

Three miles beyond he came to his home. It was little more than a cabin, with a two-acre patch of cleared ground back of it, isolated in these hills. The nearest farm was twenty miles east. The nearest town, Tannersville, fifty miles south.

Harvey reached the door at the same time that a battered, chugging Ford crept up along the weed-grown road which was the only direct connection with civilization. The car stopped and a young, slender girl leaped from it into his arms—when he had dropped his paraphernalia.

"Mary, darling," Harvey greeted his wife. "Any luck today?"

"Poor dear, you look tired," she said in tender evasion. "And yet you look a little excited, too. Well . . . about the paintings—"

"I am excited!" Harvey suddenly burst in. He grasped her by the shoulders, looking deep into her azure eyes. "Mary, do you believe in—elves?"

"Jim!" She peered closely at him.

"I mean it! I saw one today. Or rather, one of the Little People."

"Jim, you aren't well yet, and you've been working so hard—"

Harvey brushed a thin hand through his red hair. "Now look, Mary. I know I'm Irish, romantic by nature, and all that. But I tell you I saw one. I'm going to find them—there must be more —and paint them—"

He stopped, turning. Again a car's motor sounded, but this time the smooth

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

purr of an expensive, new one. The man who stepped out was short and heavy-set, his face thick-featured in the fading twilight.

"Henry Bainbridge!" breathed Mary, pressing close to her husband.

"Hello," Bainbridge greeted tersely. "Just happened to be looking over some of my other property hereabouts. Thought I'd drop in on you." Then, as though having satisfied the amenities, he raised his voice. "I didn't receive your last monthly payment, Harvey. You're four months in arrears now. How long do you expect me to wait?"

"We'll make a payment next month," Harvey said just as tersely. "You know you overcharged us for the land, in the first place. I've had some bad luck recently, placing my paintings—"

"I'm a business man, not a father-confessor," Bainbridge retorted gruffly. "I want those payments made up. This is good land. Other people would like it, if you don't. Understand?"

HE turned on his heel, and his car backed around, its taillight vanishing along the winding road that led to the highway.

"You're not crying?" Harvey said softly, as he took the unsold paint-sketches from the car to the cabin.

"No," Mary denied, avoiding his eyes. "But I didn't place a single painting today, in Albany. Jim, what are we going to do? You know what he meant. You've got to stay here. Your health—"

She whirled, her eyes widening suddenly. "Jim, what were you saying before? About—elves!" Worry shone from her eyes, more than for just his physical health.

"Elves!" Harvey bitterly snapped the word out. "There's nothing like a little reality to knock out romantic nonsense. Bainbridge wants his money. The garden needs weeding. Those are the real things."

His tall form drooped a little. "All along I've been like that—foolish, impractical, romantic. Our elopement. The attic in New York. I was going to be famous overnight. I ruined my health. My first sensible move was to get this place, a year ago. Nature began healing me, and inspiring my art. But I've got to keep myself in line. The garden needs weeding. I'll do that tomorrow first thing. And if my pictures don't sell better, they need a hired hand at the Wilkins farm."

He took a deep breath, getting that off his chest. He looked out of the window, at the full moon slowly rising, bathing the countryside in silvery splendor. Tiny figures, dancing in a glade under such a moon, the legends went.

He shook his head firmly.

"What I saw," he murmured, "was a squirrel or chipmunk. . . ."

CHAPTER II

Festival in the Forest

YOUNG Aldic peered from behind a clump of grass as tall as he was, down into the glade. The rising moon spotted the rich sward with liquid silver, through the rustling branches of giant trees.

It was the Full Moon Festival, gayest of the Little People's nightly cavortings. The young people were dancing and laughing, to the tune of golden cymbals and tiny reed-flutes and three-stringed snail-shell lyres. The sweet night air was filled with tinklings and pipings, and the great moon smiled down and nodded.

Aldic's blood surged. He had not enjoyed such a festival now for several moons. More, his eyes had singled out the lithe, swaying form of a lovely girl

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whose hair blazed like spun-platinum.

Aldic's heart quickened, for she was sculptured beauty. But he paused, as he was about to reveal himself.

"Ey-oo!" a voice called down there, and a stalwart young man raised his arm for attention. "Ey-oo! Listen to Boro! Listen to me, all of you. I chased away a bear, before, single-handed!"

The dancing stopped. Figures crowded around Boro, the girls eagerly, the other men reluctantly.

"A bear?" queried the girl with silver locks. "How wonderful! Tell us of it, Boro."

"It was a mighty bear," Boro complied, sweeping his arms around in a huge arc. "The greatest you've ever seen. Ten times taller than I. I battled with it. Every time it charged, I rapped its toes with my club and danced beyond its nose. Finally I leaped on a stump and smote it a terrific blow on the nose. Howling, it ran off like a frightened rabbit from Boro the Mighty!"

"From Boro the Braggart!" amended a male voice. "It could not endure his endless boasts."

"There was no bear at all," charged another voice flatly.

"No?" Boro challenged. "Then what tore this?"

Standing in a moonbeam, Boro turned his back. Half his spider-silk shirt was gone, ripped from the rest as if by a great claw. And a thin but noticeable scratch ran the length of his body.

"Does one receive scratches in the back when fighting from the front?" demanded a male voice derisively.

"Who said that?—" As he spoke, Boro leaped among the clustered men. He dragged one back in the moonbeam, cuffed him with the flat of his hand, and then shoved him sprawlingly to the ground.

"Now," he shouted, "who else says Boro is a liar?"

He leered around, his powerful body hunched for a spring. The men were suddenly silent, and backed away. The girls gazed at Boro with sighs.

"I do!"

BORO whirled like a shot, searching out the clarion voice. It came from beyond the group.

Aldic leaped from his concealment, and strode down the slope. The moon's limelight revealed him as a tall, slender figure, clad in silken-green shirt, kid-leather shorts, and alligator-skin moccasins. His arms and legs were bare and sun-bronzed. His weapons hung from a belt of copper-wire, from which the light reflected a burnished glow. But not as bright a glow as the flaming red hair of his head.

He stepped with easy grace before Boro.

"I call you liar, Boro the Braggart. I saw the episode. The bear was a small one, not full-grown. It was pursuing you. You had no thought of fighting it, in your great fright. You did not chase it away. Someone else did."

Boro squirmed in humiliation, at being thus exposed by one who had obviously seen the true event. But he was more surprised, for the moment, than shamed.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

All their eyes were on Aldic wonderingly, for none had ever seen him before. He was a total stranger to their tribe of a thousand, all of whom knew each other.

"I am Aldic, a wanderer," the newcomer returned. A child of nature, he went on without false modesty. "I have traveled from far, and have crossed many lands and had many adventures. I have even been in some of the great cities of the Big People."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He is from another tribe!"

"He wears clothes made from the Big People's things!"

"He has been in their cities!"

It was a mixed chorus of awe and respect from the group. Not in the memory of those living had a stranger visited them from another of their tribes scattered widely over Earth's vast surface.

Boro growled a little. This newcomer had punctured Boro's tale, and robbed him of the limelight, both. It was too much. Boro unslung his bow, fitted a bone arrow to its caterpillar-silk string, and let fly. The arrow whistled through the air, thunked against a tree-trunk, and hung quiveringly by its point in the dead-center of a target used for practice.

Aldic answered the challenge, unslinging his bow of sprung steel which had once been a delicate watch-spring. The arrow, also of metal, was a darning needle with the eye broken in half for a notch. The twang of a violin-string sounded as the metal shaft darted for the tree and split Boro's arrow into splinters of bone, taking its place at the bull's-eye.

Boro shot his second arrow for a target twice as far away, taking more care, testing the wind. The sliver of bone arched high. Carelessly, Aldic loosed his second shaft almost at the same time. In mid-air, the steel arrow struck the one of bone, shivering it in two—and went on to impale the target hardly an inch from the center.

The exhibition brought a chorused gasp from the watchers. No Robin-hood, of their legends or those of the Big People, had ever attained such skill.

BORO, face glowering, was not satisfied. Balancing his spear in hand, he crouched and then flung it almost straight up. It reached the branch of a tree, high overhead, with just enough force to cling by its fire-hardened point. Twenty-five feet in the scale of the Big Ones. Three hundred feet, in proportion, to the Little Folk. A mighty cast.

The point of Aldic's spear consisted of a common-pin embedded in the wooden shaft. His body snapped like a bow-string as he cast. Higher and higher the weapon sailed. Its sharpened point split the haft of Boro's spear and went thrice its length further before falling back. Aldic caught it in his hand, and glanced quietly at Boro.

Sweating, Boro jerked his stone-headed axe from his belt, and hurled it against a tree-stump with such force that its blade sank half-way into the hard wood. Aldic's arm, like whipcord, buried his bright-metal axe-head completely out of sight.

All this had taken only seconds. The crowd had watched in silent wonder. The red-headed stranger was besting Boro, who had no peer among the tribe, in the manly things. Now two of the men ran to the pile of prizes—things stolen from the Big People—and returned carrying a flat length of wood with markings on it.

The ruler was placed upright on the ground. Tallest of the tribe, Boro stood against it and was measured off at the fourth little marking above the sixth big marking. His eyes gleamed triumphantly, and then clouded as the stranger's mane of red hair reached a notch higher—six and 5/16 inches.

Cheers now rent the air, from the spectators. It was good to see Boro, bully and braggart, humbled. The smiling, red-haired stranger was a man of men.

"Aldic is taller than Boro!"

"And more skillful!"

"And stronger, perhaps!"

"Look out, Aldic—"

The last was a half-shriek from

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the girl with silver-blonde hair.

Without warning, Boro had launched himself at Aldic. At the girl's cry, Aldic pivoted and met the attack: Boro locked his arms around Aldic's waist. The powerful muscles of his shoulders and arms bulged out thickly. Aldic's arms promptly went around Boro's shoulders.

Locked together, unmoving, the two stalwarts exerted their full strength. The crowd's breath went out, as though they were the ones being squeezed. Some shook their heads sadly. Though taller, Aldic was not as heavily-built as Boro, who was a miniature Hercules.

Yet now they saw how the receptively smooth arms of Aldic had suddenly tightened into knots of iron. His back and shoulders bulged beneath his green-silk shirt in one mass of muscle. Relentlessly as a vice he squeezed till Boro gulped, went purple, and sagged to the ground.

Aldic, barely breathing himself, stood over his adversary, panting on the ground.

"Now, Boro the braggart and liar, tell the truth! Tell them who saved you from the bear—"

CHAPTER III

Reward for a "Big One"

A SHARP cry interrupted, from the edge of the group.

"Eyoo! A fox! A fox! Run!"

A glance over their shoulders and they all saw the red-furred killer leaping from the thicket-edges of the moonlit glade. Of all their enemies—save man—the fox was the most to be feared. Yet the Little Folk, inured to danger, were not panic-stricken. They melted away into the protecting thickets with a speed that promised to rob the prowler of a meal.

All except one. Spent by the recent ordeal, Boro staggered to his feet, not fully in command of himself. He stumbled across the glade, last. The fox's quick eyes saw this straggler, and veered toward him with slavering jaws ready for the kill.

Aldic had run with the rest, though behind them. Glancing back, he saw the imminent tragedy. Stopping and turning with the swiftness of a snake, he raced back, tugging at the spear slung back of his shoulder.

In the center of the glade, Boro had turned bravely, to at least die facing the deadly killer. None of the Little Folk were cowards. He fumbled with his bow, in the hopeless attempt to speed an arrow at one of the fox's gleaming eyes.

Aldic flung his spear on the run, yet knowing the fox's thick fur would protect it from vital harm. The spear pricked flesh and stuck, but the great beast hardly noticed. Aldic's thoughts flew faster than his twinkling feet, as he neared. An arrow might strike a vital spot. But he would have to stop and aim. There were only seconds left, before those terrible jaws would crunch with Boro between them.

Aldic used the seconds to reach Boro and leap in front of him. And now the ferocious teeth snapped for Aldic.

Aldic did a strange thing. He jumped straight into those gaping jaws! A moan went up from the watchers at the glade edges. Aldic had sacrificed himself to save Boro! Yet Boro stood stupidly, too amazed to run.

A still more amazing thing happened. Aldic had not jumped blindly. His quick little feet had planted themselves solidly just back of the lower jaw's teeth. Bending double, he placed his two hands against the bone-ridge of the upper jaw, under the snout. One mighty heave Aldic gave, with all his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

muscles cracking, breath tearing from his throat.

And then—a muffled crack as the tortured jaws of the fox gave way.

Aldic was thrown head over heels as the fox jerked convulsively. Then with a bark of agony, the red-furred killer loped away, his lower jaw hanging limp and broken.

Aldic picked himself up and threw back his mane of red hair in laughter. "Eyoooo!" he roared. "Reynard will chew only air for a time!"

AND now the others scrambled forward and filled the glade with clarion cheers. They held hands and formed a ring around Aldic and the still stunned Boro, dancing. A chant rose into the night air.

"The Big Ones are clumsy and witless,
We are so clever and spry,
They never will, never will catch us,
Not to the day we die!"

"What is all this commotion among you young people?"

The new voice was the querulous one of venerable Zutho, the Elder, who had just entered the glade from their village. He hobbled up, his long beard like silken moss. Behind him came all the villagers, the children and mothers and the old, to join the Festival which would now swing into full tide.

The merrymakers stopped and parted to let Zutho through. At the same time they babbled out the story of the fox, confusedly.

"Broke the fox's jaw?" Zutho cried, almost incredulously. "Indeed that is a mighty feat, Boro!"

Zutho and the villagers crowding up gazed at Boro admiringly. The young people hushed one another, forcing Boro to make his own admission.

"No, Father, not I. Though if Aldic hadn't stepped in front of me, I would have. It was Aldic."

"Aldic? Who is Aldic?" For the first time Zutho caught sight of the stranger, with his berry-red locks.

Aldic stepped before him, inclining his head deferentially.

"I am of the Little Folk of Ireland, Father."

"Ireland?" Old Zutho's eyes sprung wide. "You are from across the Great Sea!"

The audience gasped. To most of them, in their restricted little world, the Great Sea extended limitlessly to wash the shores finally of half-mythical lands that seemed utterly beyond reach. Only the Elders and the wise knew the other lands were real. It was as though Aldic had come from Mars.

Aldic nodded.

"I am a wanderer. I slipped aboard one of the Big People's sailing vessels, hiding in its hold. At times, I was spied, but taken for a rat-creature. At times, I fought with the rats, down below."

He displayed a scar on his left arm, marking the bite of sharp teeth, then resumed.

"The great boat docked and at night I crept to shore. Many Big People and lights were about, but I escaped detection easily, for the Big Ones are clumsy and witless. And blind to the unbelievable. I traversed the city—New York City, it is called."

"New York City!" breathed Zutho, reminiscently. "I was there once, in my youth. It is choked and crammed with Big Ones. Aldic, I hope you took care—"

"Yes, Father. I am well aware of the First Law of our people—never to be seen by or have traffic with the Big People. I gained the countryside. I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

knew of your tribe here in the hills to the north, and sought you. But I wasn't sure I would find you. It has been a century and more since either of our tribes has had a visitor from the other."

"YES." Old Zutho shook his head sadly. "We Little Folk dare not carry on much communication, because of the dangers of crossing the Big People's territory. Our sole hope of continued existence and liberty has been to keep out of their knowledge. At times, in the far past, we had traffic with the Big Ones, to our sorrow. But for a thousand years the First Law has been engraven into our policy. Only by chance have the Big Ones seen or heard of us, as their legends state. It must continue so—forever."

He took a deep breath.

"But this is not the time to talk of sad things, on Full Moon Festival night. Tell me, Aldic of Ireland, how are your people? Do you live as we do—dance, sing and be happy despite the shadow that hangs over us?"

Aldic nodded. "We are celebrated in the Irish legends particularly for our Dance of the Fairies, glimpsed at rare times by a Big One, but never believed by the rest."

Zutho chuckled. "Superstition among the Big Ones has been our best cloak. They see us more seldom than any woodland creature, even the clever shrew. Therefore, we do not exist. Are all your people red-haired like you? And"—he looked up and down—"why, you are almost as tall and strong as our Boro!"

"Taller and stronger, Father!" It was the silver-haired girl who had spoken, Teena. She told briefly the episode preceding the fox. The newly-arrived villagers grinned at Boro's hanging head.

"And now tell us, Boro," insisted Teena relentlessly, "who saved you from the bear?"

Boro looked around and saw no escape. "It was a red-haired one—"

"Aldic! Aldic!" shouted the young people.

"No." Boro shook his head, along with Aldic. "One of the Big People. He who lives in the cabin nearest us." He told the rest of the story quickly, eager to have his humiliation over with.

A startled hush came over the glade.

"One of the Big Ones saved you?" Zutho murmured. He raised his eyes. "As rarely as the blue moon has that happened in our history!"

"And the Big One must be rewarded!" rang out a voice. Instantly, a whole-hearted acclaim arose through the glade.

Zutho hesitated, then nodded.

"That is as much a part of our tradition as the First Law. The First Law states no traffic with the Big Ones. The Second Law states no killing among ourselves. And the Third Law says any act of kindness toward us, unwitting or otherwise, by a Big One, must be rewarded—so long as it does not violate the First Law."

LUSTY cheers rang out. The Big Ones, masters of Earth, were feared and dreaded with a great fear and dread. But an act of kindness from them was, by contrast, an occasion for wild joy in reciprocation. A cruel god's smiles are a blinding light.

"Now, how shall it be done?" Zutho queried.

Aldic raised his hand for attention. "After the Big One chased the bear and went to his home, I followed. Perhaps"—he grinned— "because he has red-hair, like mine. I overheard their speech, which I understand well. They have a garden that needs weeding."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Good," Zutho acceded. "But we must not risk too much. Ten of the young men will go, tonight, the quickest and strongest. Who shall lead them?"

"Aldic! Aldic!" drowned out a few sporadic calls for "Boro!"

Boro turned away angrily, but Teena taunted: "You must go, too, Boro. After all, it was your life that was saved!"

In a short time, Aldic stood at the head of ten young men. They danced up and down spiritedly, eager for the adventure ahead.

Zutho had a last word. "Take care, you young ones. This is not a lark. Work quietly and do not be seen. Do you hear?"

He tried to look stern, but the wrinkles around his old eyes smiled. "Ah, if I were only young myself," he mumbled. "Go. Aldic, I trust you to bring them back safely."

The party pranced off, through the moonlit glade, knowing all eyes were on them. But beyond, at Aldic's signal, they crept single-file into the forest dark. Nocturnal killers roamed the woods. The party went on cautiously, their tiny eyes peering around warily. Their little hands gripped their weapons, ready for instant action.

Nothing of note happened. When the moon was high at zenith, the cabin loomed before them like a gigantic castle. Quiety, efficiently, their Lilliputian forms went up and down the rows of the garden, tugging out weeds with both hands, as though uprooting young trees. It was hard work. Their little backs ached and their little hands blistered, but outdoor life had inured them to such hardships.

On through the night they worked, and when the moon sank, they crept away as silently and unobtrusively as they had come.

CHAPTER IV

Aldic Returns a Favor

SUNRISE spread its red glory over the Catskills, and reflected in added brilliance from Jim Harvey's thatch of hair, as he brushed it and then sat down at the breakfast table.

"In the city we never saw the sunrise," he mused. "Out here I wouldn't miss it for the world . . ." His voice trailed away as he buried his nose in the newspaper Mary had brought back from Albany the evening before, like any city-dweller.

"The eggs are getting cold, dear," Mary reminded. "I want to get an early start today. I'm going to place some of your pictures if it takes all day."

"You look pretty even with your chin out," Harvey teased. His eyes went back to the paper—and widened. "Mary, listen to this! What a coincidence!"

He read the small item tucked away opposite the comic page.

"New York. Do the legendary Little People exist, as Dr. Asa Bolton claims, or is it a hoax? Dr. Bolton returned from the Catskills recently with an unproved story of seeing the Dance of the Fairies, and even capturing tiny six-inch high people. They escaped, he says, and the body of one he still had was spirited away—by the Little Folk, he claims. Dr. Bolton stated that he had already enlisted the aid of naturalists of the Anthropological Institute in his quest on the Catskills. It is sometimes to be wondered whether so-called scientists are not more gullible than laymen."

"Exactly," Mary said quickly. "Now,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jim, you aren't trying to convince yourself you saw one of them yesterday?"

The glow in Harvey's face faded. "Guess you're right. Ready, dear? I'll pack you into the car and then get right at weeding the garden. You see I remembered!"

Mary smiled and glanced out of the window at the garden. The saucer in her hand dropped and shattered on the floor.

"Mary, what's the matter?"

"You shouldn't frighten me so, Jim! You foolish boy, getting up in the middle of the night and weeding the garden."

Harvey took one look and bounded out of the door. He stared down at the cleanly plucked rows of greens, thunderstruck. Not a single weed had escaped.

"You *didn't* do it, Jim?" Mary gasped, seeing his face. "Then who did? Who in the wide world—" She stopped, utterly bewildered.

"Elves!" Harvey murmured dazedly. "Like in the fairy tales, returning a good deed. I saved one yesterday. Mary, this proves it—"

"It doesn't!" Mary cried, in relief. "Thank Heaven I just remembered. I gave the Wilkins boy some candy yesterday, passing their farm. He's a serious boy, and must have come all the way here last night just to show his thanks."

Harvey had to grin. "You'd rather believe that?" He became serious, pointing down to soft dirt which showed the light impress of what might be tiny feet, a half-inch long—or animal tracks. "What about those—"

He was interrupted.

"Hello, there!"

HARVEY turned. Out on the road stood three men, dressed in shorts and light mackinaws against the morning chill. They carried a camera, foodpack and butterfly net among them.

"I'm Dr. Pertie of the Anthropological Institute of New York," the elder of the three introduced himself. "Wilson and Zeller, my assistants. We have a camp about ten miles north. We've been up here a month. We're looking for evidences of the Little People."

The younger men grinned rather sheepishly, but Dr. Petrie went on firmly. "That is, in the scientific sense. Small manlike beings about six inches high. Have you seen any signs of them? Or do you have the slightest suspicion, no matter how faint, that such little creatures may exist around here?"

Taking a long look at the butterfly net they carried, obviously for the purpose of snapping up little beings like prize insects, Harvey checked the eager words on his lips.

"No, of course not," he said. He smiled derisively. "You mean actual little men six inches high?"

The men shrugged, as though about ready to give up their quest, and left, striking off through the woods. Harvey could not resist whistling a soft tune after them, whose words ran:

"Last night I saw upon the stair,
A Little man who wasn't there—"

"I'm glad you said that, Jim," Mary remarked as they packed pictures in the car. "I'm going to Albany now, and you have all day to paint. I'll bring the Wilkins boy some more candy, on my way back. Jim, please say it?"

"All right," he acceded. "There aren't any elves. And we have a mortgage payment to meet. And the art dealers in Albany say I've lost my touch. Those are the real things."

A few minutes later, painting paraphernalia under his arm, he was head-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing for the woods. His red head vanished among the trees.

Another red head, a far tinier one, emerged from the rose bushes at the side of the house.

Aldic pondered what he had heard. He had not left with the others, after the weeding, leaving Boro to lead them back. He had stayed partly to see that nothing went amiss. Mostly, to see the reaction of the Big Ones when they noticed their garden weeded. It had thrilled his little soul to see the glad surprise in their eyes. Especially that of the man. Aldic felt a peculiar affinity toward him. Though one was a giant and one a midge, there was the bond between them of common geographical origin. And red hair.

Aldic pondered. Yesterday this Big One had unwittingly saved a life. Today, perhaps not so unwittingly, he had declined to set human bloodhounds on the trail of the Little Folk. Had withheld a clue to their existence.

The Big One should be rewarded again, according to the Third Law. But how? Aldic smiled suddenly and scampered around to where a vine grew against the cabin wall, acrobatically swinging himself up hand over hand. A partly ajar window let him in. He jumped to the floor. Against one wall leaned three of yesterday's paintings, drying.

Aldic nodded happily as he saw paint-pots nearby, and several brushes in a box. Needing water, he roamed about till he found a thimble in a sewing-basket, and filled this from a bucket by the sink.

With two-handed strokes of a brush, Aldic labored for the following hours. He added a touch of silver to a brook meandering through a glen. A delicate stroke of brown to suggest a rabbit nibbling among herbs. He stood on tiptoe to put a dash of vivid green where it belonged, high in a tree. And now a tinge of purple where the shadow of a mountain fell. Here and there the brush touched.

Little exquisite touches they were, that Aldic's rustic soul transfered to canvas with a supremely artistic instinct.

Squinting his eyes, Aldic was satisfied. The scenes, twice as high as he was, looked real enough to step into. And an aura of mystery hung in them, too. Aldic was almost tempted to paint himself in, peeping from behind a toadstool. But no, there was the First Law. As it was, the paintings would appeal to those among the Big Ones who liked to dream of things unseen.

"Eyoo, my big red-headed friend," Aldic exulted aloud. "That is the way it should be done."

He put the brushes back carefully, and left. With him he carried the thimble, perched over his red thatch, as self-given remuneration. Surely the Big Ones could get another.

OUT in the forest, finding a rabbit warren, Aldic nudged a sleepy buck aside and curled up next to its soft fur. Mannikin and rabbit slept through the heat of the day.

In the late afternoon, approaching the village of Little Folk, Aldic heard the blast of a snail-horn, used only as an emergency alarm. He broke into a run and saw the glint of brown fur ahead. A bear! By its size, the same one who had yesterday chased Boro, and today evidently nosed out their village's site. But there was no Big One near this time to chase it away.

Aldic heard the splitting of wood as the great monster ripped open one of their tree-stump homes. He heard the screams of a child—screams that clipped short. Then he was close enough to see the bear's claws scrab-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bling within the hollow for another delectable tidbit. Half the awakened community had emerged from its camouflaged variety of homes, rubbing sleepy eyes that filled with horror.

The men were paralyzed, not knowing what to do. The bear was seldom a menace unless he blundered into their village, sniffing out their homes. It hadn't happened for a generation. How could this towering behemoth, ten times bigger and heavier than the frightful fox, be killed or even driven away? Within the hollow stump, three children and their parents were trapped. The bear would claw them out, one by one.

Aldic took the situation in at a glance. Without pausing in his stride, he ran up the bear's back like a nimble mouse, using its hair for hand-holds. It ignored him completely, intent on ripping the tree-stump wider. Aldic reached one shoulder, spear in hand. Balancing on his feet against the bear's movement, he clutched the spear in his two hands, high over his head.

He thrust then, with all the impetus of his powerful little shoulders, straight into one ear of the bear. The sharp metal point buried itself in tender flesh. The bear screamed and hunched, throwing Aldic through the air like a chip of wood. The animal rolled over and over, clawing at its ear. The haft sticking out broke off and the bear ambled away awkwardly, uttering painful grunts.

Fearful faces peered from the tree-stump, seeing they were saved. Old Zutho hobbled up to where Aldic sat on the ground, shaking his head from his fall. He came to his feet, unhurt.

"First the fox," Zutho commended. "Now the bear. You are a mighty warrior, Aldic. I and my people thank you for the lives you saved."

"The bear will come back," Aldic said thoughtfully. "My spear-thrust was a mere prick to it, after all. Its pain gone, the bear will come back tomorrow, now knowing where to find us."

Zutho sighed heavily.

"It should be killed, but that is impossible for us to do. As with the Big People, we can only scurry from its mighty feet. We will have to migrate from this village-site to a new one. We will have to start now—"

"Wait." Aldic held up a hand. "Perhaps I can kill the bear."

"What? You are mad, Aldic. You must know that no weapon of ours can kill a bear."

"No weapon of ours," agreed Aldic. "Still, I wish to try. Will you give me till tomorrow?"

Zutho looked long at Aldic, on the point of calling him a young, conceited fool whose so-far successful exploits had gone to his head.

Teena's silvery-sweet voice sounded, as she stepped forward. "Let him try, Father. Somehow, I trust Aldic. I think he can do anything he says!"

A murmur of agreement ran through the others. Teena suddenly flung her arms around Aldic, kissing him. "It was my sister and her children you saved," she said, blushing as she stepped back.

Over Aldic's face stole a red as vivid as that of his mane of hair.

Zutho grinned, then spoke gravely. "You may try to kill the bear, Aldic of Ireland. We all trust you."

"I will need a helper, the strongest young man." Aldic's eye fell on Boro. "You, Boro."

"No!" Boro roared, obviously nettled by Teena's act. "Whatever mad thing you hope to try, I'll have no part of it."

"Are you afraid, Boro?" Teena suggested.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Boro hesitated. Then—"I will go!" he snapped.

CHAPTER V

An Expedition

AN hour later, panting, the two young men peered from bushes toward the cabin.

"The Big Ones are not back yet," Aldic said. "Follow me, Boro, into the cabin."

Dropping to the floor from the window, after climbing the vines, Boro straightened and spoke his first words.

"Now what, Aldic the Fool? The bear is certainly not here. Have you thought better of your rash resolve? As Zutho said, no weapon of ours can kill a bear."

"But that can!" Aldic pointed over the fireplace, where a long metal instrument hung on two pegs.

"The weapon of the Big Ones!" Boro gasped.

"It is called a rifle," Aldic supplied. "Come, we will try to get it down."

Leaping from a table to the mantel over the fireplace, they found the gun high out of reach.

"We can throw vine-lassoos up and drag it from the pegs," Boro ventured.

"It is big and heavy. It would crush us, or fall to the floor and be damaged. The Big Ones will be back soon, anyway." Aldic's eyes roved thoughtfully about the living room, then lighted. "Come, Boro. Help me write a note to the Big Ones on what they call a typewriter."

It was an amazing undertaking to Boro, though obviously Aldic was not unfamiliar with the instrument. Standing at the top, Boro held the paper as Aldic, at the side, grasped the roller-knob in his arms and strained every muscle to turn it. The paper moved around, though a little crookedly.

It was a succession of surprises to Boro as he blindly obeyed Aldic's commands. "Sit on the shift-key—there, Boro." Then Aldic jumped from the top down on another key and the machine threw up a lever and snapped loudly, startling Boro.

"Now the space-bar, Boro—that long black bar.". . . "Now stamp on that key with two dots, from where you are.". . . "The black bar again." . . . "Wrong letter that time. Stamp on the backspace there, Boro.". . . "How do you spell 'against' in the Big People's language?"

Aldic tugged open a dictionary on the table beside the typewriter. On hands and knees he searched for the word when he had the right page open. At some time or other, Boro was aware, Aldic had spent much time spying on the Big Ones, learning their language. Then Aldic was back at the machine.

Finally it was done and Aldic unrolled the paper, placing it flat on the table. Boro was about to speak, but instead a gleam came into his eyes. This was a violation of the First Law, writing a note for the Big Ones to read. When Boro told of it back at the village, Aldic would be in disgrace!

AT sunset, Jim Harvey trudged to his cabin, tired as usual, and still aware that he had somehow lost his "touch." Worry over the payments had done it, no doubt.

Fifteen minutes later the Ford arrived and Mary stepped into the cabin, discouragement in her face. "I placed only one today," she began, then stopped, noticing how fixedly her husband was staring at the paintings set to dry against the wall. "Jim! They're wonderful! You've touched those up beautifully."

"Did I?" Harvey whispered, running

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a nervous hand through his red hair. "Mary, what if I told you I didn't—"

She laughed. "And that you didn't weed the garden last night? Darling boy, you'll always be the same. The night before our elopement you insisted I had wings, like an angel, till I almost became angry. I spoke to the Wilkins boy, by the way. He wasn't here, I'm sure of that. Now confess—*oh!*"

While talking, she had picked up the paper beside the typewriter, glancing over it. She faced her husband sternly. "Jim, this is carrying it too far. I'm not asking to be amused—"

Harvey snatched the sheet from her hand, reading the somewhat badly typed message.

"I cannot Reveal myself to You. It is against Our FirSt Law. We needyour gun. If You wish;to help uz, bring it outside, by a TreE, and leave it there tonicht. Aldic of Ireland. P.S. We both have Red hair."

Harvey looked up, his blue eyes far away. "Aldic was king of the fairies, a thousand years ago, according to Irish mythology. This little scamp must be his descendant—"

"Jim, you mean—"

"It's genuine? Of course, I wouldn't play such an elaborate practical joke on you, Mary. The Little People exist, don't you understand? And I'm going to bring out the gun tonight!"

A call came from the outside the house. It was one of the three naturalists—Wilson—alone. He spoke excitedly. "Can you give me a lift to the highway? Dr. Petrie will meet me there with our car. We separated today, in our search. And look what I found!"

He displayed a torn bit of cloth of some kind, oddly shaped as though to fit a tiny form, with a claw-mark in its center.

"A small bear passed me this afternoon," Wilson explained. "Ambling fast as though running from something. He blundered through thorn bushes and left behind this clue to the Little People. He must have caught one, and clawed away its clothing before eating it. This rag clung to his claws till it came away in the thorns. It means the Little Folk, all right. I'd swear this stuff is woven from spider-webs!"

HARVEY burst out laughing, to the surprise of Wilson and Mary both.

"Sorry to explode your hopes, Wilson. But I recognize this cloth. Remember, Mary, we cleaned out the trunk the other day, and you decided to throw away that mantel doll at last? Isn't this part of its miniature dress, Mary?"

Mary nodded mechanically.

"We threw it in our usual dump-heap, back of the cabin," Harvey continued. "We've seen that bear-cub rooting around among the cans and bottles, at times. Bears are omnivorous, you know, and he probably clawed the doll apart in hopes of finding it edible. Too bad the explanation is so prosaic, Wilson. But it will save you future embarrassment with your companions. Come on, I'll give you a lift to the highway."

When Harvey had returned from delivering the very crestfallen young naturalist, he explained to Mary.

"White lie, of course, about the doll. If the Little People *wanted* to be known, they'd reveal themselves. Therefore I sidetracked Wilson. There are things, Mary, that even science must leave alone. Call it my poetic soul, or romantic nature, or whatever you want—but I had to do it!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was dark now. Harvey took down the gun, slipped five shells into the magazine, and strode out into the night. He placed the gun upright against a tree. Then on second thought, smiling he laid it flat on the ground.

Had little ears heard him? Were little eyes watching his every move? Or was some cunning maniac roaming the hills, as Mary might suggest next, taking it into his twisted mind to commit a murder without leaving a clue to himself?

From the cabin window, later, Harvey saw the moon rise and flood the space under the tree with its soft but revealing light.

The rifle was gone!

STEPPING along in perfect rhythm, Aldic and Boro carried the rifle. Aldic was at the front under the stock, Boro behind with the round barrel across his shoulder. The gun was heavy, but they were strong and kept up the tireless pace.

Once a weasel, thinking its victim occupied, darted at Aldic, sharp teeth ready to crunch into soft flesh. Without dropping his burden, Aldic's left hand, holding his axe, bit deep into the weasel's tender snout, sending it off whimpering with pain.

"Eyoo!" chuckled Aldic, and added unnecessarily. "It seems to me the weasels of my land put up a better fight."

"This is mad," Boro grunted for the tenth time. "What will we do with this clumsy machine when we get back?"

"You will see," promised Aldic, a little tickled that he alone knew what he had in mind.

The villagers all saw, gradually, when they began carrying out Aldic's commands, after he had arrived. The gun, a cannon to them, was propped against a stump with forked sticks. Aldic drilled six men in certain duties, to raise or lower the barrel at instant notice. Another six were stationed on each side of the stock, to swing it sideways if needed. One man would be at the trigger.

"The bear will come at dawn, likely," Aldic predicted, "nosing about the homes again. He must be decoyed across the glade. Someone must be that bait, running before him and climbing one certain tree. I would volunteer, except that I must superintend the shooting of the gun."

"Let it be Boro," rang out Teena's voice. "He had experience once before in eluding the bear. If it catches him, he can turn and easily battle it—as he once claimed to do!"

With a hue and cry, Boro was elected for the dangerous assignment. Boro shrugged, bidding his time. After Aldic's harebrained venture had failed, Boro would reveal the note-writing, crushing Aldic with double disgrace. Then Teena would despise Aldic, and once more be sweet to Boro.

CHAPTER VI

Death of a Monster

AS the rose of dawn lighted the woodland scene, the tense community in their hidden homes heard the crackling of twigs. Tiny spying eyes watched the bear nosing at stumps, coming nearer and nearer, seeking the Little People for prey.

Aldic nudged Boro. Taking a breath, Boro leaped out and ran across the bear's path, toward the dancing glade. The bear, evidently reluctant to make a chase if he could find trapped victims in stumps, did not follow till Boro had deliberately danced in front of him.

"Eyoo!" Boro shouted, making the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dramatic most of what was a dangerous business anyway. "You fat, clumsy, ugly monster! Catch Boro if you can, who is fleet as the wind, strong as—"

He had no time for further self-eulogies. The bear snarled and made for the audacious little upstart. Boro raced across the glade and managed to reach the designated tree in time to scramble to its lower branches. Bear-like, the pursuer stood on his hind legs, stretching his claws for the mannikin almost within reach. In another moment, if anger so moved him, he would climb . . .

Aldic was shouting orders at the gun. Now was the time, while the bear stood upright, a perfect target. Aldic straddled the stock of the rifle, peeping through the sights. The men with forked sticks were ready to move the barrel whichever direction he commanded.

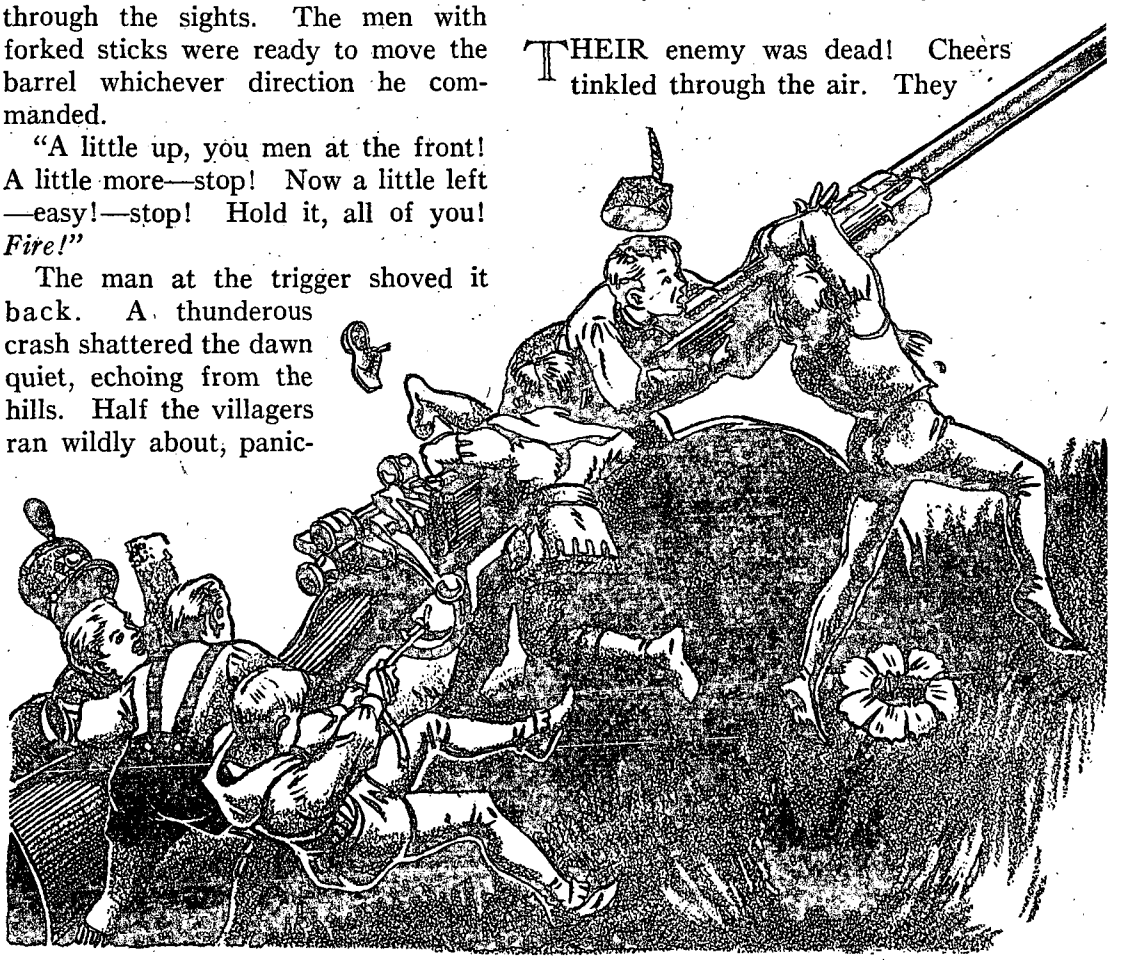
"A little up, you men at the front! A little more—stop! Now a little left—easy!—stop! Hold it, all of you! *Fire!*"

The man at the trigger shoved it back. A thunderous crash shattered the dawn quiet, echoing from the hills. Half the villagers ran wildly about, panic-stricken, sure that a mountain had fallen. They had never heard the weapon of the Big Ones before, except as far-away barks.

Aldic picked himself up from where the recoil of the gun had tossed him like a rag doll. Blood trickled from a bruise in his forehead. The dozen men who had handled the gun lay around in dazed bewilderment. One lay still, completely knocked out. Another groaned with a broken arm. A third lay pinned under the gun itself.

Women ran to help them. The rest of the villagers ran with Aldic to the glade. Boro still sat on his branch, rigidly, staring down at the body of the bear. The shot had torn half its head away and killed it instantly.

THEIR enemy was dead! Cheers tinkled through the air. They



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Aldic pulled the trigger, and the tremendous concussion hurled him from his feet

wouldn't have to seek a new home after all.

"This is a mighty deed, Aldic," said old Zutho. "One that will be handed down from father to son for generations!"

"But, Father," spoke up Boro, clambering. "Aldic violated the First Law, to bring this about." He told of the note.

Zutho looked at Aldic a little shocked.

"Is it true, my son? Have you deliberately revealed our existence to a Big One?"

"It was either that or migrating, which at this time would be dangerous," Aldic said calmly. "I did not want to alarm you, but three Big Ones from New York are prowling about, half suspecting our existence."

"But then you have made it worse!" gasped Zutho. "The note will prove it to them—"

Aldic shook his head. "The red-haired Big One is to be trusted. Did he not turn one of the three searchers from the trail? Admit it, Boro, for you heard."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Boro grunted an admission. Aldic put his arm around his shoulder. "But let us give due credit to Boro, for performing his hazardous task well!"

Cheers rose for the two stalwarts standing together, slayers of the mighty bear. Teena stepped up and kissed them both, in sight of all, so that all the villagers wondered which she would eventually choose.

"To work!" Zutho commanded.

With a will, the Little Folk fell to cutting up the great carcass, swarming about it like ants. They would have meat, preserved in herbs, for weeks to come. And the warm fur would be useful against winter's bite. A ring of armed men stood at guard against scavengers attracted by the smell of blood. Even the fox would hesitate before he dared charge that phalanx.

"Come, Boro, we will return the gun," Aldic said.

When they left, behind them trooped a dozen men carrying choice cuts of the fresh meat, as a gift to the Big One.

THAT evening, Jim Harvey saw that Mary was glowingly happy, as she returned from Albany and pointed proudly to the empty back seat of the car.

"The three pictures sold to the first dealer, Jim! He wants as many more as you can turn out. He says you have a touch in them now that's sheer genius. How did they turn out today?"

Harvey waved at three paintings drying against the wall.

"Yes, I've got the touch now." His voice was that of a man to whom some inner secret had been revealed. "Thanks to little Aldic and his lesson."

Mary started. "You still believe—"

Harvey motioned toward the gun once more hanging from its pegs over the fireplace. "I found it on the doorsteps when I got back. Also this—"

"Bear-steak!" Mary gasped. "But Jim, I still can't believe in them. I just can't! After all, we haven't *seen* them—"

She stopped as the smooth purr of Henry Bainbridge's car sounded outside, and then the harsh blast of his horn. Another man was with him.

Mary clutched her husband's hand, at the determined frown on Bainbridge's heavy face. "I'm foreclosing," he said without preamble. "I'll take the court loss in costs, in order to resell to a cash client."

The cold, brutal announcement was like a physical blow to Harvey and his wife. All their hopes and dreams shattered.

"You can't!" Harvey protested. "My pictures are beginning to sell now. You've got to give us a chance."

"Sure I'll give you a chance," Bainbridge smiled thinly. "If you pay me $500 by next week, the place is yours. That's a business proposition. And now, I'm within the law in taking whatever pictures you have on hand, as your only tangible negotiable property, against your payments in arrears. This is Deputy Lang, of Tannersville."

Harvey stood by helplessly as his paintings were loaded into Bainbridge's car.

"If you get the $500, mail it to me in New York City. Remember—a week!" With this parting shot, Bainbridge drove off.

"In other words," Harvey said bitterly, "Bainbridge has a higher offer for this property, enough to absorb the loss in foreclosure and make a profit. Strictly business. He's within his rights. Naturally our problem doesn't concern him. Mary, crying won't help."

Mary swallowed bravely. "Five hundred dollars!" she murmured, in a tone that doubted the existence of that much anywhere. "Jim, it's awful to have to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

leave this place, just when we had a start."

Harvey nodded haggardly. "And just when I was getting the thrill of my life, over the Little People—"

"If they only *did* exist, Jim! And were able to help us! Oh, I'm getting as foolish as you are. That's only in fairy tales—" And now the dam of Mary's tears did break.

Harvey's red head bowed over hers against his chest, pityingly, for her heartbreak. As for the Little People —Harvey wasn't sure himself. He was only certain of one thing—that the world had tumbled apart.

ANOTHER red head moved, outside the open window, peeping forth from ivy-vines along the cabin wall. Aldic scrambled to the ground, Boro after him. The other men had left long before. Aldic and Boro had stayed out of curiosity. It pleased them to hear the Big Ones talk of the little beings who moved so mysteriously and kept out of the knowledge of man.

"They will have to leave," Aldic murmured a little sadly, as the two headed back for the village. "I would like to help them."

"It is best they leave," Boro grunted. "They know too much of us. But tell me, Aldic, why are the Big Ones cruel to each other like that?"

"They have not learned to be civilized," Aldic returned simply. "They worship a god, called money, to the exclusion of all the more fundamental things of life. It is money my red-headed friend needs—" His voice trailed away in thought.

At the village, Aldic approached Zutho, telling the story.

"I am going to New York City, for money," he concluded.

"Tamper not too much with the doings of the Big Ones," Zutho demurred. "Especially their good money. I forbid it, Aldic."

Aldic spoke gently. "You forget, Father, that I am not of this tribe. This I do on my own accord, not as a tenet of the Third Law."

"Still I forbid it," Zutho proclaimed. "You are from Ireland, but this region is in my jurisdiction. I cannot risk the safety of these my people for a foolhardy venture. If you were caught, our existence would be known to the Big Ones. You must not go, Aldic."

Aldic seemed about to speak, drawing himself up, but instead nodded obediently. Yet that night, while a merry dance went on in the glade, Aldic stole into the thickets and crept away. A hand suddenly caught his arm. Aldic whirled to face Boro, who had evidently kept an eye on him.

"Call the others," Aldic dared. "Before they come, I will toss you into the brambles." His hard young body tensed for battle.

Boro strangely shook his head. "I will go with you, Aldic."

Aldic gaped in surprise. "Why Boro?"

Boro scuffed at the ground with his foot. "You saved my life once. Perhaps I can save yours, in the dangers ahead."

Aldic grinned. "Good. I was wishing for you to come along." Then, his face sobering gravely, he opened a small pouch in his belt and took therefrom one of two small pellets. "Keep this with you, Boro. It is deadly poison, from the nightshade. So concentrated is it that it will cause the flesh to wither away in hours. If caught by the Big Ones, with no escape—"

He paused, and Boro nodded grimly, putting the pellet gingerly in his own pouch.

Another form suddenly slipped up before them.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Teena!" they said as one.

"I heard," the girl whispered. "My heart goes with you—both. When you come back—"

The two stalwarts looked at each other, wondering which the girl had already chosen. She had simply not told, lest one, or both, fail to return. With a last murmur of farewell, the two adventurers slipped away.

Teena wiped away her tears before reappearing in the glade. When it suddenly came to general notice that Aldic and Boro were gone, she calmly told Zutho of their departure.

"After them, men—stop them!" But Old Zutho waved his command aside in the next moment. "No use to hope to catch them, the two fleetest." His eyes blazed. "Rash fools! When they return—*if* they do—they shall merit the full penalties of the broken First Law!"

CHAPTER VII

On to New York!

AT a steady trot, the two adventurers forged their way through the night forests, up hill and through glen.

"We have only a week to reach New York, find money, and return," Aldic informed. "We must not lose a moment."

"New York!" Boro murmured, shivering in excitement. None of the present generation had ever dared invade that stronghold of the Big Ones.

Their eyes, as well adapted to night-vision as day, watched carefully on all sides for the night hunters. Once a ferret crossed their path, and lay there with its skull split open by their hand-axes. A fox treed them till Aldic's needle-arrow in its snout sent it yelping away. A browsing deer, startled, nearly trampled them with its hard hooves, in its panic to get away from what might be a bear. They swam a small river with steady strokes, and on the other shore impaled a hissing snake with their spears, chopping its head off.

"Eyooo!" exulted Boro. "We are a mighty pair. Who dares stand against us?"

"The skunk," Aldic said dryly, pointing ahead. The swaggering creature blocked their path. Without a word, Boro slunk to the side, through brambles that scratched, following Aldic.

At dawn they reached the concrete highway which Boro had seen before and which he knew led to New York, along the great Hudson river. Boro shrank a little from the great roaring machines that thundered by, like ocean-liners on wheels. Tired from the night-long pace, they curled up in a convenient hollow log and slept through the day. They could only travel by night.

At dusk, they hunted a field-mouse and ate of its tender flesh. With renewed strength, they ran along the highway course, in the bordering fields.

"It would take us a week to reach the city, running," Aldic said. "We must catch a ride on one of those machines."

Boro sucked in his breath, at the daring thought. "But how can we? They roar by faster than the wind."

"There is a crossroad ahead," Aldic pointed. "Machines stop there. I know of these things. Keep close to me."

At the cross highway, brakes squealed constantly. Aldic's sharp little eyes watched, from a bush just beside the road. "There! That one has a New York City license. Come, Boro. Do as I do."

The two little forms scuttled out of hiding like swift animals. Any Big One seeing would idly take them for rats or chipmunks, in the dark. Aldic leaped

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on the running board and jabbed his spear down into the rubber-matting that covered it. Boro did the same. The car started up again, bearing two hitch-hikers unsuspected by the driver.

AS gears ground, and the engine roared into high speed, Boro gaspingly watched the countryside blur by. A fierce wind tore at them, threatening to whip them loose from their spear anchorages. At times, bumps in the roadway tossed them up and down till their teeth jarred.

They clung for dear life. Once Aldic's ready arm pulled Boro back as he almost lost his grip. Boro's face was white. The wheels of a car behind would have flattened him to pulp, if the fall first hadn't broken his every bone.

"Eyoo!" Boro said weakly then, at Aldic's somewhat scornful smile. "This is great sport!"

But Aldic himself felt the strain. At the next crossroad, the car stopping, he whispered: "There is only the driver inside. The back is empty. Follow me!"

As the car halted, Aldic jerked his spear from the rubber mat and took a running leap to the top of the smooth back fender. From there he jumped lightly to the edge of the open window, and down into the back of the car. Boro followed, in as many seconds. They crouched in the dark space of the rear floor.

Hearts beating wildly, they remained tense till the car started up again. The driver hadn't heard or noticed. They were safe. The ride was much smoother here. Enjoyable, in fact. Aldic and Boro looked triumphantly at each other, their little souls pleased at their daring, stealing a ride right under the nose of a Big One.

The machine thundered on. The driver seemed in a vast hurry. He wheeled past car after car, on the road, sometimes by a slim margin as oncoming cars brushed by.

"This driver is reckless," Aldic said worriedly. "Sometimes these cars smash against one another in terrible accidents."

The next moment, to Boro's astonishment, Aldic leaped to the back cushion, thence to the door handle and finally to the backrest of the front seat. Crouching just behind the Big One's ear, he began whispering, in their language.

"You are driving too fast! You are driving too fast!"

Over and over. His thin low whisper reached the Big One's ear only as a faint faraway murmur. The man squirmed uneasily, but kept up his prodigious pace. Again he began to roar past a car, on a hill.

"You are driving too fast! You are taking chances!" Aldic droned on.

With an exclamation, the driver eased his throttle and remained behind the car ahead. He gasped sharply as headlights suddenly loomed over the rise and a huge truck whistled by. He would not have made it, trying to pass.

"Thank Heaven!" the man grunted aloud to himself. Thereafter he drove at a much saner pace, unknowing that his conscience had been in the guise of a tiny man.

LATE in the night, as suburban sections whirled by, Boro became nervous.

"Where exactly are we going, Aldic?"

"Into the heart of the city—if this car takes us there," Aldic returned in a guarded whisper. He went on gravely. "From now on, Boro, we must be utterly alert. The Big Ones surround us on every hand."

Boro did not say it, but he had already given themselves up for lost, curs-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing silently his rash participation in this mad venture. He fingered the pouch which held the pellet of death.

Aldic saw the gesture and squeezed Boro's arm. "Take heart! I have been in cities before. With reasonable luck, and constant caution, we can surmount any danger. You are not afraid?"

"No!" Boro snapped, stung.

They crossed two bridges, and now the fantastic ramparts of Manhattan reared about them. Boro hardly believed his eyes. Higher than any mountain he had seen towered the sheer dwellings of the Big Ones. Everything was on such a gargantuan scale that he felt like a tiny insect.

Aldic stirred, finally, peering toward the east, where a faint pearl glow limmed the buildings. "It is close to dawn. We must leave this car and find a hiding place in the city, through the day."

When the car next stopped for a red light, Aldic led the way, leaping to the window onto the fender, and then to the pavement. Hearing a slight sound, the driver turned half-way, then shrugged and started up, with a green light.

Scuttling to the overhang of a curb, Aldic and Boro flattened in its shadow, watching the car roll away down the street.

"Thanks," Aldic breathed after it, half derisively. "He would not believe, if some one told him, that all night he had two of the Little Folk as passengers."

Then they peered around. The night streets were almost deserted. Only an occasional car, and a still rarer pedestrian moved within sight.

"There are no trees, no grass!" marveled Boro. "The Big Ones lead a strange life."

Aldic's eye turned to a street sign which read, on two cross-bars: "Fifth Avenue—34th Street."

Boro was now craning his neck, his eyes popping, trying to see how far up the incredible structure nearest them pierced. It was the Empire State Building, two miles high in the eyes of six-inch beings.

"This must be the pillar that holds up the sky!" Boro said excitedly. "As Zutho once conjectured."

"And what held up the sky before this was built?" Aldic snorted. "Old Zutho may not know everything. Some of our superstitions about the Big Ones, Boro, are as childish as theirs about us."

A pedestrian passed close to the curb, so close that the squeak of leather shoes rang like gongs in their ears. And now the first shaft of dawn speared redly over the scene.

"We must hide quickly!" Aldic stated. "The city will soon wake to life. Come, Boro."

After long study, Aldic had picked their hiding. With no one in sight for the moment, they ran before a metal box, eight times as high as they were. On the outside was painted: "Waste Paper. Help Keep Our City clean." It rested next to a metal pole surmounted by a shining lamp. There were foot and hand holds, because of its roughened design, and they clambered up, leaped across to the top of the tin-box, and darted down in after pushing aside a swinging door.

They landed in a pile of papers. The air inside was stale. But it was dark, and completely cut off the outside world. Through the walls, they could hear the rising tempo of city life, as the new day began. The crescendo of traffic arose, and the babble of voices. And Boro began to feel again like a little insect caught in a beehive of angry, buzzing wasps.

"Relax and go to sleep," Aldic bade laughingly. "What use to die a hundred deaths ahead of time?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER VIII

Two Elves in a City!

JIM HARVEY ran his hands through his red hair, at the breakfast table, in his cabin in the Catskills. His face was haggard from a sleepless night.

"Five hundred dollars!" he muttered again. "Some dealer in Albany might loan it to me, if I contracted to make it up in pictures. Might!"

Mary said nothing. What was there to say when air-castles lay in ruins?

Harvey fingered the paper signed "Aldic." His voice was low, desperate. "If I found and caught one or two of the LittlePeople—and *sold* them—"

Mary spoke now, sharply. "I wouldn't let you do that, even if they *did* exist. Why, it would be—horrible! But they don't exist. And we have to do something for ourselves. No little creatures in our imaginations are going to do it for us."

NIGHT fell in New York City, and the pangs of hunger came to Aldic and Boro, awakening from slumber among the papers of the tin box at Fifth Avenue and 34th Street.

Boro stoically said nothing, but Aldic said it.

"Food? Well—"

They huddled down as for the hundredth time the swing-cover above creaked, letting in light, and more papers that struck them with not too gentle force. Something else hurtled in—a half-eaten apple that bounced off Boro's head, half stunning him.

"And there it is!" Aldic laughed.

They ate to repletion of the fruit. It filled the stomach, if nothing else. "And now," Boro growled, "let us get out of this stuffy prison. I would rather face the Big Ones than breathe much more of this close air."

The confinement lay heavily on them, for they were used to the openness of nature. But not until hours later, in the dead of night, did Aldic give the signal, when the city-noises had again faded.

Getting out was not as easy as getting in. They piled papers one on another, but were still out of reach. Boro was alarmed till Aldic unwound a thin cord wrapped around his waist—a five-foot lariat of strong, woven caterpillar-silk.

"This rope will be of more use in the city than our weapons," Aldic commented, tossing again and again for the slight projection of a bolt-end up high. The loop finally caught and Aldic went up hand-over-hand nimbly, catching hold of the swing-opening. After Boro came up, Aldric retrieved the rope and peeped out. When no pedestrian was in sight, they scrambled down the lamp-post and scuttled to the shadow of a curb.

Boro expanded his chest thankfully, but made a wry face.

"This city air smells bad, too. How can the Big Ones stand it all their lives? Well, Aldic, now what? Is there any of this money we have come for within reach?"

Aldic was thoughtful. "It is all around us. But I must see a telephone book. Come, Boro."

Boro followed, mystified, and they ran beside the curb—toward Sixth Avenue down 33rd Street, a New Yorker might have told them. Toward the end of the block, Aldic stopped and surveyed a small open-all-night lunch room. It was empty, in this late hour, and the proprietor was deep in a newspaper. The door was open. There was a telephone booth in the corner, beside it a stand of telephone books.

In the twinkle of an eye, they were within. Boro waited in trepidation below while Aldic clambered up silently.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fortunately the Manhattan book was open. Aldic turned pages with a minimum of flutter, scanned quickly on the right one, and went down again. The proprietor had looked up just once, at the door, as though hoping to conjure a customer through it. He had not looked in the corner by the phone booth.

OUT at the curb again, Boro wiped the sweat from his brow. "I would rather battle the fox, than strain my nerves waiting for something to happen. Do you know where to go now, Aldic?"

"Yes, except that I do not know this city well. The next thing we must do is ask directions."

"Ask!" cried Boro. "Ask a Big One? Are you mad?"

"A certain kind of Big One," Aldic said mysteriously. "That one in a blue uniform. He is called a policeman. And he is Irish!"

Boro following with a resigned air of fatalism, Aldic led the way along the curb and then over the sidewalk to where the lone policeman leaned against the building, staring off into space, whistling. He was large, middle-aged, florid-faced, with Irish blue eyes that held the kindly twinkle peculiar to their kind.

Aldic took a deep breath, and then boldly tugged at the man's trouser-leg. The florid face turned down. The blue eyes widened as they made out the twin mannikins. The mouth fell open.

"Saints preserve us!" rumbled the Big One's voice. "It was only a little drink!"

"Hallo, there!" Aldic called up. "Pick me up, ye son of Erin!"

Aldic gripped Boro's arm. "If the worst happens to me, run and leave the city. But I'm sure of my man."

Eyes bulging, the policeman stooped, as if the little being's command must be obeyed. With surprising tenderness for so great a creature, he picked Aldic up. He placed him on the palm of one hand level with his eyes—and stared as though he would continue doing that forever.

"Saints!" he mumbled again, pushing back his cap with his free hand and displaying sandy-red hair. "It has red hair, begorry. What can the little scalpeen be?" Suddenly the blue eyes flashed. "Be you one of the—the Little People?" Almost automatically he added: "Sor!"

"That I am!" Aldic yelled back, his piping voice shrill to the Big One's ears. "If ye are a true son of Ireland, ye'll help me. If not—if ye so much as raise a finger against me—I will lay upon ye the curse of the fairies!"

The policeman started. Behind his eyes that had seen the harsh realities of his world of crime prevention tugged a superstition born in his blood centuries upon centuries before. The Fairies were a pleasant myth, sure. But what was this in his hand?

"The curse!" Aldic emphasized.

"Oh no, sor! Please!" Superstition won. "What—"

He broke off as a pedestrian bore down on them. In one swift gesture, the policeman slipped Aldic into his coat pocket, and whistled tunelessly till the person passed. Boro had safely huddled behind a leg.

Aldic straightened out his rumpled shirt as the big but gentle hand once again held him as on a platform.

"What would yez have me do, sor?" the policeman asked, now irrevocably a fellow-conspirator with his little charge.

"I want directions," Aldic demanded, "to get to a certain address—" He gave it.

"Your wings—" suggested the policeman respectfully, half turning the mannikin to look.

"It pleases me to use your transpor-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tation, crude as it is," Aldic lied magnificently to cancel the superstition. "Which subway, for instance. Answer me!"

"Yes, little sor! Well, you'll be after taking the Eighth Avenue subway. Then—" The policeman gave explicit directions.

Aldic nodded. "The Fairy Queen will reward you for this deed. But if you tell a soul you have seen us—the curse! Now put me down and turn away. It is not well for you to see, as we vanish from mortal sight."

PLACED on the sidewalk, Aldic grabbed Boro's hand and scampered for the curb. They ran along it. When they looked back, the policeman had just turned around, but too late to see them. He stood for a moment, as though asking himself a silent question regarding the episode's reality, then moved off, scratching his head.

"What fools these Big Ones be!" Aldic said, as his distant relative Puck before him had first said, centuries before.

The memorized directions ringing in his ears, Aldic led the bewildered Boro several blocks along, hugging shadows when there were eyes to see. Then into a subway kiosk, down stairs, and under a turnstile to the train platform. Human eyes might have seen them, as the two mannikins crossed clear stretches, if they had thought to look down rather than at their own eye-level. Aldic used every advantage of shadow and niche with masterful forethought.

A sign said: "Uptown express." The train was long in coming. Boro paled as the mighty ten-car juggernaut rumbled up, to stop with creaks and hissings. Preoccupied Big Ones stepped off and on. The doors hissed shut. Aldic pulled Boro forward and they leaped to a small open platform between cars, as the train started.

If the ride in the car had seemed exciting, this to Boro was heartstopping, for he saw concrete walls rushing by no more than a foot away. The noises alone were terrifying, to one used to the solitude of deep forests. The train ground to a halt at station after station, and kept thundering on and on.

"We aren't crossing half of Earth," Aldic smilingly informed Boro. "This is all one city. Seven million of the Big Ones live here, in an area smaller than your tribe's hunting ground."

"The Big Ones are mad," Boro decided, giving up trying to conceive how many finger-countings equaled seven million.

At the station labeled "181st St.", they left the train and scuttled up to open air. Aldic took his bearings from the hanging lights of a bridge spanning the Hudson. George Washington Bridge, the policeman had called it.

One street down and several over they went. Aldic saw a street sign saying "St. Nicholas Ave.", named after one of their race, of centuries before, who had made toys for the children of the Big Ones. The next street was Audubon. Aldic followed its curb. Finally they peeped from behind a tree that seemed out of place in this steel and stone world. An apartment building held the number "87."

"That's it," Aldic said. "We're going in."

"Going in?" Boro protested. "We'll be trapped!"

"We take our chances," admitted Aldic. "But we have two things on our side—smallness and wits."

"Is that the only place we can get this—this money we have come for?"

"No." Aldic smiled, as though enjoying a future joke. "But the most appropriate."

"What fools *we* be!" Boro suddenly

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said. "Risking our necks, and the safety of our people—for what? Why are we doing it, Aldic?"

"Because a friend among the Big Ones outweighs risks."

Aldic sighed heavily. "But mostly, I think, out of defiance to the Big Ones. Our people's spirit lives on the sagas of ventures against our unnamed masters who do not even know we exist. . . ."

Boro nodded slowly. He remembered the ceaseless warnings of his childhood, to fear the Big Ones. And then, like a light in darkness, the tales of exploits under their very feet. The Big Ones, too, yearned and strove for liberty, even a shadow of it.

Together they strode forward, to complete a saga that would warm their people's hearts for generations to come. The apartment-hotel loomed as one of the most impenetrable strongholds of the Big Ones. To get in—and out—would be adventure supreme.

CHAPTER IX

An Adventure in Cat-Taming

THE only entrance to the big apartment building was a revolving door. Aldic peered cautiously through the glass partitions into the lobby beyond. At this late hour, only the night telephone operator was there, dozing with his back to the doorway.

"Push!" Aldic commanded, and together, straining their utmost, they managed to shove the strange door just far enough to slip in and run under a lobby chair.

"I know something of these dwellings," Aldic said. "The Big Ones here live on various shelves. I have to find out which level we want."

They fell silent and waited as a late arrival entered, exchanged a perfunctory greeting with the sleepy operator, and went up in an elevator. Then Aldic crept around the desk and looked over the man's bobbing head at a chart beside a series of pigeon-hole mail boxes. In returning, the spear slung behind his back clicked against the desk.

The operator started, stared around in half interest, then went back to his dreams with the muttered word: "Mice!"

"We have to reach the 11th floor," Aldic informed Boro. "Come."

He had already seen that the door marked "Stairs" was propped half-open, to create something of a breeze since the night was warm. The stairwell was utterly deserted, and used only in emergency, such as fire. The Big Ones used the elevators, averse to unnecessary physical effort.

Using their spears as poles, they vaulted from step to step, each as high as they were. It became hard work after a time, and the stairs seemed endless.

"I would rather climb a mountain," panted Boro, "where at least the slope is gradual."

At the fifth landing, Aldic peered from the propped-open door out into the hallway. His eyes gleamed at a daring thought. He pulled Boro with him to the automatic elevator, open at this level where the last passenger had stepped out. That is, open except for a precautionary latticed metal gate through whose framework they wriggled, into the cage.

Unslinging his useful lariat again, Aldic cast for a knob at the chest level of the Big Ones, pulled himself up, and pounded in the button labeled "11" with his fist. An automatic door hissed shut and the cage arose like an obedient slave.

"Magic!" Boro muttered fearfully, and then grinned delightedly as noth-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing dire happened. Harmless magic, anyway.

AT the 11th floor, the automatic door opened and they squirmed through the lattice-gate into a carpeted hall. Rows of doors lined both sides. Behind them slept dozens of the Big Ones, unknowing of the two tiny intruders.

"They are packed like rabbits in a warren," grunted Boro. "Who are they hiding from?"

Aldic stopped before a door marked "C" with a name card under it that meant nothing to Boro, for he could not read the Big One's language, though he understood it well.

"Now we have to get in. There is but one way. Keep close to me, Boro."

After a cautious glance up and down the hall, Aldic boldly stood before the door and rapped on it with his spear-butt. The sound would register within as a knock, a custom of the Big Ones to inform each other of their presence, rather than an uluating shout of "Eyooo!"

It was not till the third series of knocks that their quick ears heard sound within. Two ponderous slippered feet approaching the door. Aldic tensed. The clank of a lock sounded and the door opened a few inches. Puff-eyed with sleep, the face of a middle-aged, portly man peered out.

Astonishment at seeing no one came over his features. He had no suspicion that two little forms, down where he hadn't dreamed of looking, had already slipped into the room, past his legs.

Closing and locking the door, muttering to himself, the man crossed the room, clicked off a shaded lamp, and retired to an inner room. Aldic and Boro heard the creak of his bed, and then the sound of his heavy breathing.

Aldic's beating heart eased.

"Well," he whispered to Boro, "now we are here. We have three days—at the most—to accomplish our mission."

"And just what is that?" Boro demanded. "You have been very secretive, Aldic. How will we get this money?"

"We'll see," Aldic said non-committally. "It is close to morning. We can do nothing now. We will observe what is before us."

Dawn was already spangling through curtained windows. The two little men were under a wide concealing structure that Aldic vaguely knew was a studio-couch. They waited to see how they could spin their plot against the Big Ones.

TWO hours later, the household woke to life. A maid-servant emerged from one bedroom and began bustling in the kitchen. Shortly after the man arose and sat to breakfast, with his wife.

Aldic and Boro saw little, for the time being. But the voices and noises came to them clearly.

The two Big People eating seemed at odds.

"That darling fur-piece is only $700, dear," sounded the wife's voice, in false sweetness. "Now's the time to get it, in spring. Prices go up in the fall, you know."

"I can't afford it," the man's voice came wearily. "Stop nagging me. You don't need it in the first place."

"But I *want* it, dear, and you *can* afford it—"

It went on, with variations, till the man left for his office, slamming the door. The woman vented herself on the maid, ordering her about sharply. Later, another voice sounded, that of a boy-child, as he was awakened, dressed, and given breakfast.

The morning hours passed, while

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Aldic and Boro listened to the doings of typical Big Ones, little of which they understood. The maid had finished the dishes and was making beds and bustling about the apartment, dusting. The wife made telephone calls and lolled about.

The boy-child wandered around, and eventually began playing with a cat in the living-room, near the studio couch. Aldic and Boro shrank back against the wall. They did not fear the child, but the cat—

And suddenly its canny eyes pierced under the couch. Its fine senses told it there was something amiss, and it crept under. A great, menacing head loomed before the two little men, as large to them as an elephantine tiger. Two yellow eyes sought them out of the gloom under the couch, and a low growl rumbled from its throat.

"We must kill it," Boro grunted, "before it kills us."

Aldic hesitated. "They will hear the noises. This cat spoils everything!"

"Tabby!" sounded the little boy's voice, in childish accents. "Come back. I want to play with you, Tabby."

But Tabby, all his animal instincts alert, was after prey. Tail swishing, he crept close to the two little creatures, claws ready. Boro's spear was balanced for a cast at one gleaming yellow eye.

Aldic knocked it away.

"Tabby!" his voice piped out. "Tabby—nice Tabby! Nice pussy!"

AT the point of charging, the cat eased slightly. Puzzled, its ears cocked forward. As Aldic repeated his soothing words, it seemed undecided, but suddenly relaxed. Its feline instincts dissolved before the plain fact of hearing a spoken voice. Any creature that spoke, no matter how strangely small, was its master.

"Nice Tabby!" Aldic soothed away its last doubts, stroking its fur and tickling its ears. He jumped back startled at a new rumbling sound. The cat was purring like a great beating drum.

"You have tamed it!" Boro marveled. "You are a brave man to try it, Aldic."

Aldic thought it unnecessary to tell Boro he had been frightened stiff, at the crucial moment, not knowing whether a sharp claw would rend him or not. They both tensed, then.

"Mummy!" sounded the child's voice as it suddenly ran to next room. "Mummy, who is Tabby talking to, under the couch? I heard them just as plain!"

Aldic and Boro looked at each other. Exposed, trapped!

The woman's voice answered.

"Tabby is talking to the little brownies, that's all. Now Elsie is going to take you to the park to play. Mother is going to a bridge party."

When they had left, Boro shook his head in bewilderment. "Brownies? Did she mean us? But why didn't she capture us then, since she somehow knows we're here?"

Aldic laughed uproariously. "Boro, at times you are utterly—well, never mind. We're safe. Come, the place is empty. We can scout around."

The following hours were an adventure in themselves. With the soul of a true explorer, Aldic went through all the rooms. Suddenly he seemed to go a little wild. He bounced up and down on cushioned chairs. He leaped to a dresser-top and tried to run a giant comb through his red mane, and admired his image in a mirror. When the phone rang, he lifted the instrument from its cradle in his strong arms and laughed to hear the impatient "hello!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hello!" from it before he thrust it back.

And everywhere they went, the cat went, purring, gamboling. Boro entered into the spirit of the thing and they chased one another around the huge furniture, yelling. They were children in the castle of the giants. It was a lark. It was fun, too, to sit in chairs and pretend they were Big Ones.

"I'm hungry," Boro said finally.

In the kitchen, dragging a chair over, Aldic managed to open the refrigerator, shivered in its icy draft, and speared a slice of sausage and a small piece of cake. They were careful to leave no crumbs.

Aldic suddenly darted out of an open French door, onto a veranda. They peered out, between a grill railing, at the widespread city, stretching up and down the Hudson in unbelievable cubistic masses. When they peered straight down, for what seemed a sheer mile to them, Boro drew back dizzily.

"Enough is enough," he grunted. "Let us get our business done and go."

SOBERED, they thought of their mission. Aldic led the way to the bedroom, with the instincts of a master burglar. In a drawer of a dressing-table, he found a jewel-box and opened it. Treasure gleamed forth. Rings of gold, chains of silver, and a string of iridescent pearls.

"Those pearls are perhaps worth a thousand dollars, in the Big People's conception," Aldic mused. "They will do—"

But now a key sounded in the front door. Aldic acted with the rapidity natural to their size, closing the box and drawer so no sign would point to their presence. Then they barely had time to race back under their studio-couch hiding-place. They would have to get the pearls at night.

The maid and little boy had returned. Soon after, the wife was back, and dinner was prepared. Hardly had the man arrived and the meal begun, than it started again.

"Tomorrow's my last chance to get the fur-piece, dear. It's genuine high-grade fox."

Aldic and Boro looked at each other. Though they hated the fox as a mortal enemy, in their woodland haunts, it seemed outrageous for the Big Ones to kill them only for their fur, not in self-protection.

"I can't afford it," the man parried, as he obviously had for days.

Henry! Don't lie to me." The feminine voice was strident now. "You're foreclosing the property that Harvey has up north and it's sheer profit because they've more than paid for it with interest. You told me yourself you have a cash buyer, at twice its value—and twice what the fur would cost."

"Why did I ever tell you?" the man pleaded with the universe at large. At the end of the meal, he gave up. "I knew it wasn't any use. Here's the money,—*darling!* I'm going to have a little poker game with the boys tonight. Okay?"

"Why, of course, honey!"

But if the woman was thrilled, another in the place was much more thrilled—Boro. Under the couch, he turned astounded eyes on Aldic.

"Now I see! I thought I recognized the man's voice—Henry Bainbridge, the Big One whom we saw up north, telling Harvey he would have to give up his home!"

Aldic laughed a little. "You finally caught on, Boro!"

Boro cursed himself for his thick-wittedness. They listened to the household sounds, ready now to play the final act in this strange drama.

After an evening phoning all her

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

friends and telling them of the darling fur-price she was going to buy the next day, Mrs. Bainbridge went to bed. The maid and junior had retired.

CHAPTER X

Plaything for a Child

WHEN all was quiet, Aldic and Boro crept forth. Getting the drawer open in the bedroom was tricky work, for it squeaked. But the heavy snores of the woman in bed—they could see now she was fat—were louder. Aldic tugged open the jewel-box. Seven crisp pieces of green paper lay three now, over the jewels, with the figure "100" on each.

"I'll take these," Aldic decided.

"But they are only paper," objected Boro. "Take the treasure."

Aldic looked rather witheringly at Boro. "This paper is that which is called money."

Boro flushed at his ignorance.

"The pearls would be hard to sell," Aldic said decisively. "And our friend might not even take them. This paper money is better."

Folding and stuffing the bills inside his shirt, Aldic led the way to the front. "We will get out when the man returns, late tonight. Our mission is accomplished. There is no further danger. Ah, we have made fools of these Big Ones!"

But danger struck, as they passed the open door of the boy's bedroom. The cat confronted them suddenly, desiring to play, remembering the afternoon's cavortings. It mewed loudly, cuffing at them and rolling on the floor in moonlight. One of its playful pats knocked Aldic stunned to the floor.

And the next moment, with a patter of bare feet, the boy was there. His pudgy hand picked up Aldic as though he were a doll.

"Run!" Aldic said weakly to Boro, but Boro did not run. He had his spear half out, but the child's other quick hand picked him up. The boy seemed about to shout delightedly, at finding the two little animated dolls. He would awaken the household. There was no escape, for he held them tightly, with their arms pinned at their sides. Too tightly, in his childish eagerness. Their senses almost swam, with their breath squeezed out.

Boro looked across at Aldic and saw the grim look in his eyes. They were caught. They would have to pay the penalty. Aldic was already striving mightily to reach a hand to his pouch, for the pellet of quick death. . . .

It was ironic, to be caught by a cat and child, after outwitting so many grown Big Ones!

It was the time for decisive action. But instead of struggling to reach his pouch, like the panic-stricken Aldic, Boro worked one arm free and upraised it. The boy saw, holding them in a moonbeam, and checked the eager shout on his trembling lips.

"Listen to me, little boy!" Boro half-shouted. His piping voice, he knew, was less likely to be heard than the boy's deeper, fuller tones. The boy listened, delighted to hear the dolls speak.

"We are brownies," Boro gasped out. "Don't make a sound. You must let us go."

"But I want to play with you," whispered the boy, respecting the request for quiet. "I won't hurt you." At the same time, suiting action to word, the imprisoning fingers eased somewhat.

Boro gulped in air thankfully. "We will come back tomorrow and play with you. Now set us down. Take Tabby in the room with you, close the door quietly, and go to sleep. Or else we

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

won't come back at all!"

Obediently, the child set them down, dragged the cat into his bedroom, and closed the door. It opened again a crack, but already the brownies had vanished.

SAFE under the studio-couch, Boro wiped sweat from his brow. "That was a narrow escape!"

Aldic grabbed his shoulder. "That was magnificent, Boro! Only your quick-thinking saved us. I had lost my head completely. You saved our lives, our mission, and perhaps future trouble for our people."

Aldic went on, making a confession. "I took you along on this mission to make you feel small, insignificant. To show you up, to yourself. I am sorry now if I ever intimated that you were dull of—"

"Ouch! Ohhhh!" Boro pretended to have a sharp pain in his ribs, from the child's eager grip, for Aldic was embarrassed. "Let us not talk, Aldic. We need rest."

Late in the night, a key grated, and Bainbridge tiptoed in with exaggerated caution. A breath of alcoholic vapors came in with him. Ready and waiting, Aldic and Boro scuttled past his legs, out into the hall, but not entirely unobserved this time. They heard the man's mutter as he closed the door: "Rotten stuff! Spots in my eyes."

Skilled now in their timing and traversing through the Big People's domain, they easily left the building. Outside, Aldic turned for the George Washington Bridge.

"I studied the view when we looked out today from that high balcony," he told Boro. "The bridge leads quickest to the north. We will run across the bridge. On the other side we will find cars going north. We will be back home tomorrow night, in time to give this money to our red-headed friend. We have done well, Boro!"

At the middle of the bridge, Aldic threw back his mane of red hair and laughed.

"Eyooo!" he cried at the city behind them. "Sleep well, Big Ones!"

SOON after dawn, two days later, Jim Harvey hardly ate at the breakfast table.

"Our last day of grace, Mary," he murmured heavily. "There's still a chance of getting a loan—"

"No there isn't." Mary's eyes weren't red. She had cried herself out in the past week. "We may as well face the facts. We can sell some of our furniture and get a month's rent ahead. We'll find a cheap place, in Albany. Start over."

But Jim wasn't listening. He was staring through the door into the living room. Slowly, like a robot, he arose and stalked in, Mary following in alarm. He reached over the fireplace, where seven pieces of green paper were pinned to the wall with thorns, under the rifle.

"Seven hundred-dollar bills!" Mary gasped. "Where—who—"

She read the answer that Harvey had come to, in his eyes.

"Hallo!"

They went out to see who had called. It was the scientist named Wilson, haggard-faced from lack of sleep, shivering, but wildly excited.

"I saw them!" he babbled. "The Little People! Last night, in the moonlight, dancing. Just a few miles off from here. Have you got a drink? I'm chilled to the bone!"

He was almost incoherent. Harvey took him in and poured him a stiff drink from a quart-bottle of whiskey, handy against colds with doctors so far away. Wilson explained more rationally.

"I got the idea of looking around at

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

night, you see, when they have their dances. That is, assuming they were the basis for our fairy legends. Petrie and Zeller balked at the night business, about ready to give it up as a wild goose-chase, but agreed to stay three more days."

He took another drink, warming his hands before the fire Harvey had built. The nights were cold in the hills.

"I went around near where I saw that bear. The third night—last night that is—I found them! Heard them first—little tinkling sounds. The woods are quiet at night. As silently as I could, I followed the sounds. I didn't go any closer than a hundred yards. But I saw them clearly. Little half-foot beings, dancing and singing."

For a moment his eyes shone, as though he had witnessed a sight beautiful beyond telling. Then his voice became flat, practical.

"Fairies, pixies, sprites, kobolds, elves, brownies—they've been called in legend, and accredited with supernatural powers. Actually, of course, they're simply a race of flesh-and-blood beings of miniature size, as Dr. Bolton claimed. *Homo minutiae!* Undoubtedly they spring from the same ancestral stock as man, apes, and all sub-men, during evolution. This is the discovery of the century, in science!"

Harvey had listened without interruption. "Another drink?" he offered. "You're still shivering. You don't want to catch pneumonia."

Wilson gulped it down eagerly. "I lay there for three hours, watching. Forgot how cold and damp it was. It was a wonderful sight, in a way, the Dance of the Fairies—"

Harvey's eyes were glowing. "I'd like to see it myself!"

"You will," Wilson promised, warmed by the liquor. "We'll capture as many as we can. Everybody will see them. Great scientific discovery, you know."

"Certainly is," Harvey agreed. He turned to his wife, who was regarding him queerly. "See, Mary? I told you they existed. Great scientific discovery. I'll drink to that, Wilson. Bottoms up!" Harvey's red head went back as he tossed down the drink.

. . . Outside the window, another red head went back, in shock. Aldic and Boro, listening, stared bleakly at each other. Not only were their people in danger, but their friend had betrayed them . . .

Mary had been staring at her husband, her eyes questioning. Suddenly she spun about and retired to the bedroom, slamming the door.

"Don't mind her," Harvey grinned. "Tell me more about those little scamps. Here—another drink. This doesn't happen every day!"

AN hour later, Wilson rose unsteadily to his feet. "Gotta go now. Tell th' others." His speech was thick.

"I'll drive you," volunteered Harvey. He was staggering too. But once in the car, he gripped the steering-wheel firmly.

He returned an hour later.

Mary met him in a cold fury. "Jim, how could you? Drinking to that, when only a moment before the Little People had—oh, you beast!"

Harvey took her in his arms, laughing. "I flipped most of my drinks into the fire." His face became grave. "There aren't any Little People, Mary."

She stared at him, ready to scream.

"Listen," he told her. "Wilson was dead drunk when we arrived at their camp. He babbled over and over about the Little People. I told Petrie and Zeller to leave with him immediately—before he lost his mind. Told them Wilson barged in on us last night, shiv-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ering from hours of useless search. We had drinks. Wilson soon got to seeing elves, I said, dancing out in our yard. Petrie looked disgustedly at the babbling Wilson. When I left, they were packing to leave. You see, Mary? There are no Little People. Wilson will never be believed!"

"You darling!" Mary nearly squeezed his breath out. "But Wilson can't be fooled. He'll come back eventually—"

"He won't find them. I've gained enough time. Wilson told me exactly where to find the Little People. I'm going to warn them to move—tonight."

"It's the least we can do," Mary agreed, holding out the money. "For this. But Jim, is it right? Where did this money come from?"

"There's no way in the world we could ever find out, unless the Little Folk tell," Harvey said slowly. "They'll never know what this means to us—and we, for our part, can be certain that no injustice has been practiced on anyone through this, no matter how queer it may seem to us."

There was a happy grin under another thatch of red hair, just outside the window, as Aldic and Boro slid down the vines and scampered off toward the village. But wearied of their travels, they first curled to sleep in a squirrel-hollow, and approached the village at dusk.

CHAPTER XI

Migration

"ZUTHO will be angry with us," Aldic warned. "And as for Teena —" He smiled faintly and glanced at the suddenly embarrassed Boro. "But look! There she comes—"

They had reached the dancing glade, and Teena was already flying from among the young people. "Eyoo! Aldic and Boro! You are back safely!"

She stopped before them, and her expression changed from gladness to sudden shyness. She was lovely, with her spun-silver hair and long-lashed eyes turned to the ground.

"Yes, we are back," Boro cried boastfully. "We have had a great adventure. We took money from right under the Big Ones' noses. We—" He abruptly broke off, and went on in changed, sincere tones. "Not we—Aldic. It is all to his credit, for conceiving and leading a venture that will live long in our people's memory."

"Where is Boro the Braggart?" laughed Aldic. "Take him, Teena. I know you choose him. You have loved him all the time, save that he was such a braggart. Now I have brought back a new Boro."

Aldic reached under his shirt and plucked forth a gleaming golden wedding ring, taken from the Big One who had taken her vows so lightly she didn't wear it. Aldic slipped it on Teena's arm, where it shone in beautiful contrast to her silvery hair.

With a little cry of happiness, Teena ran to Boro's arms.

Aldic turned away with a smile, and saw old Zutho hobbling up as fast as he could. He waved his gnarled cane before the two young stalwarts.

"You have broken the First Law! Perhaps you have been seen, and we will have to migrate—"

Aldic nodded. "You must move to a new home immediately, deeper in the wildwood."

"I knew it!" raged Zutho, pounding his cane on the ground. "You must be punished. I sentence you, Aldic and Boro—"

"Wait, Father, before you say it." Aldic went on, telling the full story, and all realized that except for the efforts

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the Big One with red hair, they might this day be caught.

"Well," old Zutho muttered, "you must still be punished, in some way. I forbid you to eat in our company for a moon. I forbid you—"

Aldic smiled peculiarly. "You forbid your—king?"

"King?" Zutho gasped. He stared for a long moment, at the tall, impressive young man, in dawning understanding. "Then your name is generic. You are the direct descendant of Aldic, ancient king of all the Little Folk!"

Zutho bowed his white head, and all the tribe likewise, in the tiny moonlit glade.

"Raise your heads, my people," Aldic commanded softly. "I am king, but only an uncrowned king. I have wandered from tribe to tribe, over Earth, seeing that all my people are well. So did my father, and his father before him. The Big Ones have become too numerous, and too scientific, to allow better contact. And so it must be—perhaps forever."

There was silence in the glade, between this monarch and his scattered driven people.

"I will leave you now," Aldic said, at their mute query. "There is a tribe in the Ozarks, whom I must visit."

Then his voice rose in a merry shout. "Look! The red-headed Big One comes, and his mate. Let us have one more dance, in this glade, for them to see!"

Just before the cold dawn, the moon peered down into an empty glade through which the wind sighed as though in memory of the Little Ones who would no longer dance here, but had gone on . . .

Carson of Venus Fights Again!

ONCE more Carson Napier roams the planet Venus, fighting to save himself and the lovely Duare from the Fishmen of Mypos. But victory seems never to be won on Venus, especially when the fighting leads toward a mysterious woman . . . a woman so beautiful that she makes other women appear as beasts! Who was she? What would Carson and Duare discover when they finally faced her? What was the strange lure of

THE FIRE GODDESS

?

A brand new novel by
EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS
in the
JULY ISSUE

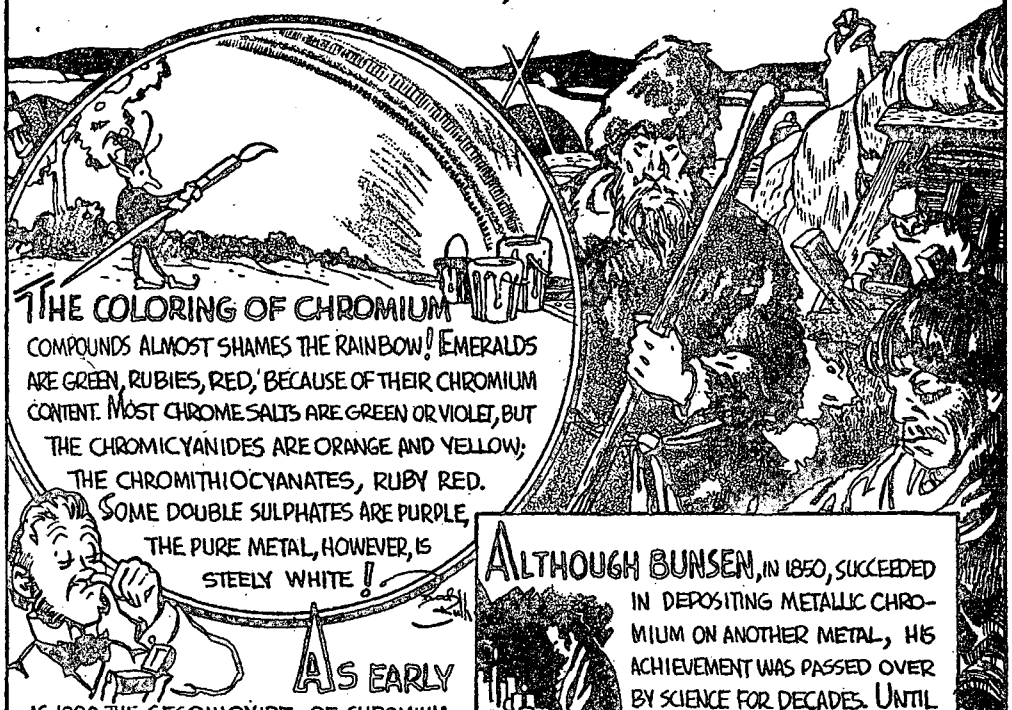
Fantastic ADVENTURES

AT ALL NEWSSTANDS MAY 20th!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Romance of the Elements---Chromium

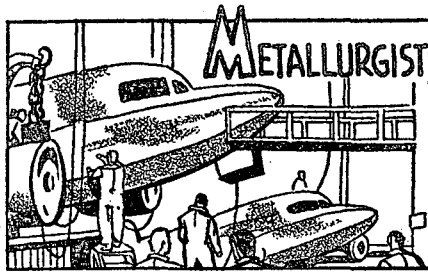
A FAR CRY FROM A PRIMITIVE MINE IN 18TH CENTURY SIBERIA—ARE THE PARTS OF A MODERN AIRPLANE—YET THE ELEMENT, CHROMIUM, SO ESSENTIAL TO MODERN METALLURGY, WAS FIRST ISOLATED IN 1798 BY VALIQUELIN, FROM SIBERIAN RED LEAD ORE. LITTLE DID HE REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WHITISH, METALLIC NEEDLES HE FOUND IN HIS CRUCIBLE!



THE COLORING OF CHROMIUM COMPOUNDS ALMOST SHAMES THE RAINBOW! EMERALDS ARE GREEN, RUBIES, RED, BECAUSE OF THEIR CHROMIUM CONTENT. MOST CHROME SALTS ARE GREEN OR VIOLET, BUT THE CHROMICYANIDES ARE ORANGE AND YELLOW; THE CHROMITHIOCYANATES, RUBY RED. SOME DOUBLE SULPHATES ARE PURPLE, THE PURE METAL, HOWEVER, IS STEELY WHITE!

AS EARLY AS 1880, THE SESQUIOXIDE OF CHROMIUM (CHROME GREEN) WAS USED IN GLASS STAINING, PORCELAIN PAINTING, BANK NOTE PRINTING. FOLKS THEN WERE USING POTASSIUM BICHROMATE IN GALVANIC BATTERIES, IN THE PRINTING OF PHOTOGRAPHS—EVEN IN ADULTERATING SNUFF!

ALTHOUGH BUNSEN, IN 1850, SUCCEEDED IN DEPOSITING METALLIC CHROMIUM ON ANOTHER METAL, HIS ACHIEVEMENT WAS PASSED OVER BY SCIENCE FOR DECADES. UNTIL THE 1920'S, LITTLE PURE CHROMIUM WAS USED; THEN SCIENTISTS SERIOUSLY LOOKED INTO CHROMIUM PLATING. IN LITTLE MORE THAN A DECADE CHROMIUM PLATING HAS BECOME A COMMON PLACE PRACTICE.



METALLURGISTS CALLED THIS THE MASTER OF METALS. CHROMIUM IMPARTS HARDNESS TO STEEL; GIVES FINER GRAIN STRUCTURE, INCREASES TENSILE STRENGTH, RETAINS DUCTILITY, RESISTS CORROSION AND OXIDATION. THEY USE CHROMIUM-NICKEL STEEL IN AIRPLANE BUILDING IN THE MAKING OF SHELLS, ARMOR PLATE AND AUTO PARTS.

CHROMIUM is number 24 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is Cr and its atomic weight is 52.01. It is a metal resembling iron, but brighter and whiter when polished. It has a density of 6.9 and a melting point of 1615°. It is extremely hard, dense and tough, and is used in cutting tools, in stainless steel, pigments, etc.

NEXT MONTH—The Romance of Cobalt

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

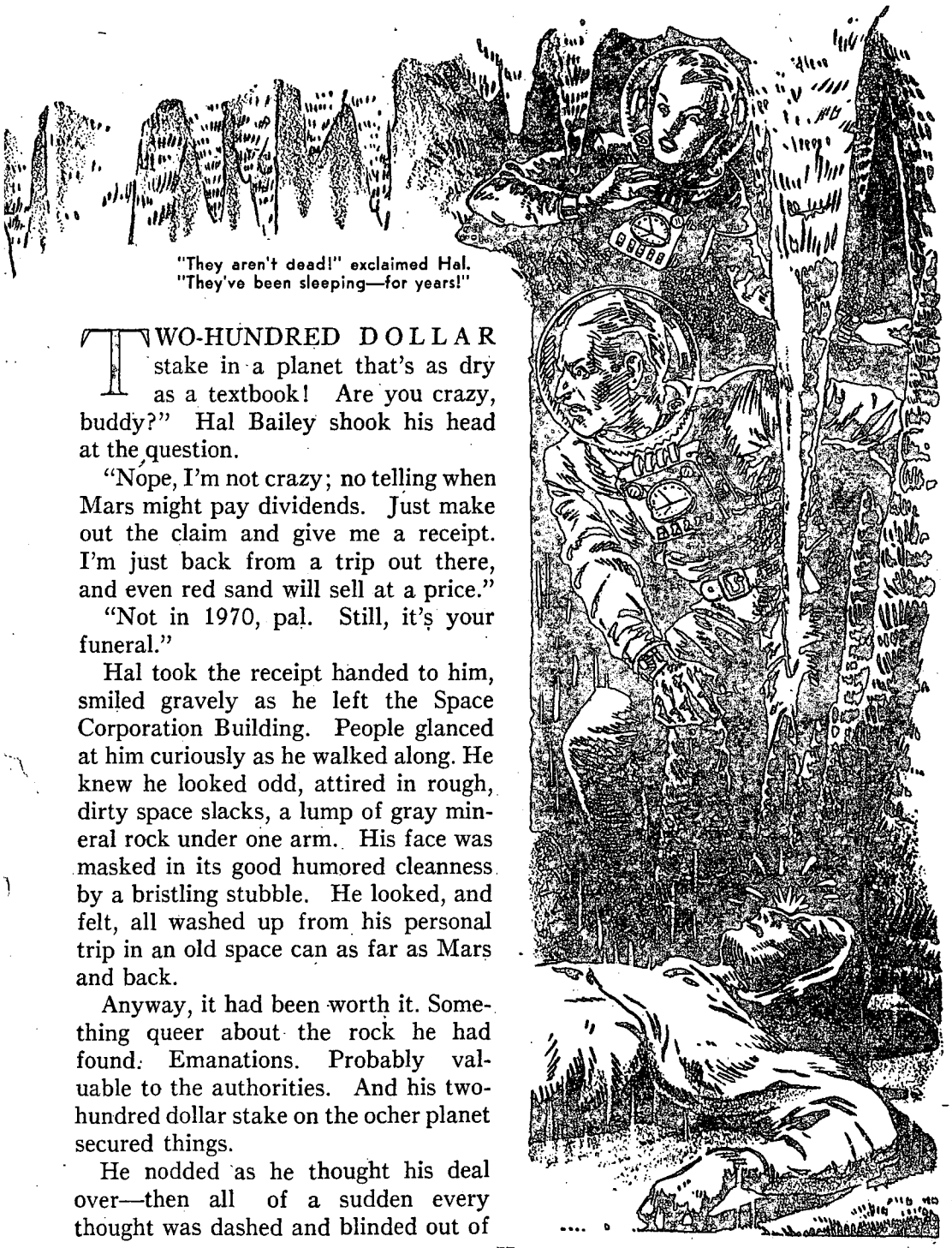
THE MAN WHO

by POLTON CROSS

"Centuries have passed, and you now own Mars," they told Hal Bailey when he awoke, "but it's worthless." Then why did they want to buy it?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOUGHT MARS



"They aren't dead!" exclaimed Hal. "They've been sleeping—for years!"

TWO-HUNDRED DOLLAR stake in a planet that's as dry as a textbook! Are you crazy, buddy?" Hal Bailey shook his head at the question.

"Nope, I'm not crazy; no telling when Mars might pay dividends. Just make out the claim and give me a receipt. I'm just back from a trip out there, and even red sand will sell at a price."

"Not in 1970, pal. Still, it's your funeral."

Hal took the receipt handed to him, smiled gravely as he left the Space Corporation Building. People glanced at him curiously as he walked along. He knew he looked odd, attired in rough, dirty space slacks, a lump of gray mineral rock under one arm. His face was masked in its good humored cleanness by a bristling stubble. He looked, and felt, all washed up from his personal trip in an old space can as far as Mars and back.

Anyway, it had been worth it. Something queer about the rock he had found. Emanations. Probably valuable to the authorities. And his two-hundred dollar stake on the ocher planet secured things.

He nodded as he thought his deal over—then all of a sudden every thought was dashed and blinded out of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his brain by a terrific blow on the head— He pitched into a darkness blacker than space.

HAL STIRRED uneasily, conscious of awakening life. It was a queer sensation, quite unlike a normal awakening from stupor. It was more like gradual recovery from cramp in which his limbs merged from leaden uselessness into warmth and feeling. Threaded through his mind was the fading memory of wandering afar off; a conviction that he had accomplished much while yet being unaware of doing it—

He opened his eyes abruptly and gazed mystifiedly about him.

Hospital? Possibly. Morgue? No, sir! Cemetery—? But no; there were men's faces watching him—earnest and respectful faces. There were six. Hal's eyes went round a room of immense proportions scattered with endless, non-paned ceiling-floor windows. Light—light and more light. It poured in on him from everywhere.

What he saw through the windows made him awaken thoroughly, and with it came a certain fear. New York, as he had known it anyway, had gone! In its place reposed a metropolis of breath-taking size rearing into the blue summer sky. Skyscrapers, bridges, street cars, radio towers, aircraft— As far as the eye could see.

"Holy cats!" he gasped suddenly, rising up. "What happened—?"

He stopped, looking down at himself self-consciously. He was dressed in a light smock which covered him from head to toe. He realized now that he had been lying on a bed of vacuum cushions, electrically heated from below. His body felt saggy from disuse. He was shaved, however, his hair was brushed, and his nails manicured.

"This," said one of the men gravely, looking at Hal with piercing gray eyes, "is indeed a momentous day! Helgis" —he glanced at one of the other men— "inform the Publicity Bureau."

Hal watched the man go, then moistened his lips.

"Say, what goes on?" he asked uneasily. "How'd I get here? Who was the guy that socked me out in the street?"

"Socked you? Oh—you mean your assailant of long ago? I am afraid we have no idea. . . ."

"No idea?" Hal looked more worried than ever. "And what do you mean by 'long ago?' How long have I been unconscious anyway?"

The man with gray eyes looked at his companions momentarily, then as they nodded he answered gravely:

"One hundred and fifty years. We had no idea when you would wake up—if at all. It became clear long ago that a curious pathological condition was—"

"Damn the pathology!" Hal exploded, scrambling off the bed. "You said a hundred and fifty years! You don't mean it! You *can't* mean it! Why dammit, it only feels like an hour ago—"

He stopped, breathing hard. He stood passive as an unemotional servant threw a robe about him.

"This," said the man with gray eyes, "is the year 2120, and you, Excellent Friend, have been the medical wonder of the past years. As record has it you were attacked in 1970 and taken to the hospital with a fractured skull. From there, your condition being one of slight body movement without actual recovery of consciousness, you were taken to the Medical Wing of the State Museum. Through the years, as your wealth was used by State trustees, you became the especial care of principal medicoes in this residence. We have eagerly awaited your return to con-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sciousness, have spent our lives studying you. The day has come . . . My name, Excellent Friend, is Nilicot."

Hal stared for a while, then rubbed his head. "You—you said something about wealth?"

"Yes, Excellent Friend. At a rough estimate you are worth some hundred million croni—dollars as you used to call them. Your other possessions include half of this city, the planet Mars — Is something the matter?" Nilicot broke off anxiously, as Hal staggered.

"No—no." Hal sat down on the bed again with a thud. "I'm just kinda dizzy. . . . I'd like something to eat and drink."

"Of course! Forgive my lack of attention . . ."

Nilicot turned to the wall and pressed a variety of buttons. Trays guided on radio beams shot through the wall's unseen hatches and came to rest in mid air at the level of Hal's lap. There they remained. With bulging eyes he stared down at the perfect food awaiting him—then with a hopeless shrug he picked up knife and fork and started.

SUDDENLY one of the men in the group, a bulldog-faced man in a tight blue one-piece suit went into detail. His voice and brain were like those of a robot for accuracy.

"In 1970 you staked a claim with the Space Corporation for a strip of territory on Mars encompassing Cynia Oasis. You became unconscious before you could make good your claim, thereby establishing a precedent in law because you were neither dead nor alive and your claim still held good. By the law of progressive land interest holdings your claim doubled in three years. Experts viewed Mars and decided it was of no particular value to us . . . In a hundred years your claim entitled you to three quarters of the planet. Now . . ." The man took a deep breath. "Now, Excellent Friend, you own Mars!"

Hal looked up and smiled weakly.

"Think of that! Is there anything else?"

"Decidedly. Your space machine was found and disposed of by the State. The auctioned money was placed in the bank for you in the form of investments. The investments realized enormous sums after the Scientific War of 2050 and it ended as you are today, with ownership of half this city and a bank account of some hundred million croni. You are a wealthy man, Excellent Friend—wealthy even for this age of finance incarnate."

"Yeah . . . seems I am." Hal got slowly to his feet, went to the window. "And when I got laid out I was a no account space-hogger. I've got the wealth—but I've lost everything, gentlemen! I've lost the girl I was going to marry, my friends, my ideals, everything. I have been pitchforked into an incredible world way ahead of me . . ."

He fell silent, staring out on the gigantic enigma of the city.

"You will accustom yourself," said the bulldog financier gravely. "If I can help you at any time my name is Dagnam. I'm Treasurer for the City."

"Thanks. I'll remember that . . ." Hal looked at the others. "I just recall something. When I was laid out I was carrying a chunk of mineral rock. Anybody know what became of it?"

"Mineral rock?" repeated Nilicot. "From where?"

"From— That doesn't matter," Hal said briefly. "I want to know if there's any record of it having been used? Any record of the theft?"

"Not that we know of," Nilicot said.

Hal compressed his lips. Then he asked:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Just why *did* I go into a trance for one hundred and fifty years? Anybody know?"

"You have confounded medical science. The blow dulled your brain and yet did not kill you. It was as though you moved into some other Time-continuum—"

"And that's the best explanation you advanced scientists have to offer?" Hal demanded.

The men shrugged and glanced at each other. Financier Dagnam said softly:

"Decidedly!"

Hal shrugged.

"Okay, I'll have to accept it—until I know better, anyway. Seems to me I've a lot to catch up on . . ."

IT TOOK Hal some time to even begin to adjust himself to the altered, advanced conditions. The city seemed to work like clock-work. Everything he wanted in this immense residence was there for him. Servants without end passed silently up and down the long marble corridors of the place. Robot controls were everyhere; teleplates brought the world to his side.

At first it was amusing, thrilling, staggering—by turns. But Hal Bailey was no mug and the vital issues of his interrupted life insisted on being dealt with. On the seventh day he summoned an astronomical expert.

"Of just how much value is Mars?" Hal asked the man.

"Of no value at all, Excellent Friend. The pity is that you staked your claim on a planet since proven so useless to science. You own it of course; by law nobody can touch it—but State examinations on your behalf have shown it has no useful mineral or other yields. Its only value lies in it being useful as a refueling station for long distance space flights."

"Would you suggest," Hal asked slowly, "that I sell Mars?"

The astronomer shrugged.

"Why not? A planet of red dust is no use to you. The Government would make you an offer. If that does not come up to expectations try the city control—Dagnam is the Treasurer."

"Okay . . . Thanks."

Hal sat in thought for a while, face grim—then he pressed a teleplate button. The Secretary of State appeared on the mirror.

Hal said, "Mr. Secretary, Mars is in the market for sale. What is the Government offer?"

"For the past twenty-five years it has remained at one thousand croni—"

"What! A thousand smackers for a whole planet? And of huge value as a fuel station—"

"That is the figure," said the Secretary implacably. "I am only the mouthpiece of the State, Excellent Friend. I am not in a position to enforce you to—"

"You bet you're not!" Hal switched off, pressed another button. Bulldog-faced Dagnam merged in view.

"Ah, Excellent Friend, good morning! I—"

"Listen, Dagnam, if I decide to sell Mars to the city what's the price?"

"Basic figure of forty fifty thousand croni, open to adjustment."

"Hm-m. . . ." Hal's eyes gleamed. "Well, thanks. I'll do some hard thinkin. . . ."

He switched off, thought out loud. "If Dagnam will pay that and the Government won't it looks as though Dagnam is responsible for whatever jiggery-pokery is going on behind the scenes. So Mars is not valuable, eh? That's what they think! Seems to me I can't do better than go and look that real estate over a little more thoroughly. I might find something."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER II

22nd Century Racketeer

IN ten minutes Hal was in his private solar car driving at a smooth 500 m.p.h. down the elevated city track to the space grounds.* As he drove he meditated, still none too certain of the setup in which he had landed. To own a planet was one thing: to be sure how much others knew about it was another.

He glanced up suddenly at his rear mirror as he heard a roar behind him. In the mirror was a powerful black solar car striving to overtake him. To move out of his single car track was impossible.

Then his alarm abated and he grinned. Of course! These cars were not like 1970. They moved in a fixed groove and the black car was on the faster track anyway. He waited for it to overtake him.

It drew level. Momentarily he caught a glimpse of men's faces, then a tiny pellet sailed through the air and struck his car engine amidship. Instantly the world seemed to burst into a fiery confusion of flying metal and flame. Wheel brakes screamed wildly and frantically, working automatically as the engine failed.

Hal felt himself flying through the air, hair and eyebrows singed with the flame from the engine. He struck out desperately, clamped his fingers more by luck than judgment to the guard rail bordering the track. He hung on, feet dangling, cast a look below him. His brain reeled. A thousand feet down yawned the chasms of the city's power-parks— His fingers slipped—

Then suddenly strong hands were gripping him, hauling him up to safety.

"You—you came just in time, I guess," he panted, rubbing his racked arms and gazing at the grim faces of the traffic police. "I was attacked by somebody—"

"We saw it, Excellent Friend," the officer replied. "From our guardhouse down the track. It was an attempt to stop your car with an atomic bomb—probably a kidnaping racket. Have no fear, we'll get them."

"You'd better!" Hal's jaws tightened. "Somebody seems to have marked objections to my knocking around—Okay, I'm all right now. Give me a lift to the space grounds, will you?"

They did, saw him safely into the private one-man express machine he chartered. Thoroughly convinced now that he had stepped into a hornets' nest of intrigue somewhere, Hal set the controls and drove swiftly over the heights of the city, flashed outward into the void. Turning, he set his course for Mars, eyed it grimly.

"Useless planet, huh? And the moment I set out for it I nearly get bumped off! Guess that residence of mine must be wormeaten with secret devices and somebody knew what I'd planned. You've things to learn, big boy. This 2120 racket is no nursery!"

He half expected as his journey continued that there would be some other attack—but nothing happened. Here and there the space patrol signaled a greeting; far behind was a leisurely old space-tramp pursuing the usual lanes . . . otherwise nothing.

PART of the time Hal slept, using the robot control. Then as Mars began to fill heaven with its streaking *canali* he was aware of considerable surprise at sighting a lone spaceship perched in the void perhaps two hundred miles from the red planet. As he drew nearer

* Solar car—A car assumed to utilize the power of the sun, this power operating from a central plant and distributed to all Vehicles. The idea exists today in the minds of scientists.—Ed.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he opened up his space radio.

"Hallo, there! What goes on? Who are you?"

To his surprise a girl's voice answered—a cool, charming voice.

"Who wants to know?"

Hal frowned, then his jaw set. He drove alongside the solitary craft and saw a face framed in the outlook port. So far as he could make out it was a good looking face, oval, framed in black hair.

"You're inside the five hundred mile zone limit," he announced curtly. "That makes you a space trespasser on my property—"

"*Your* property! Who are you anyway?"

"I'm Hal Bailey, owner of Mars. If that doesn't convey anything try 'Excellent Friend.'"

"You're—you're him are you?" He heard her gasp. "Excuse *me!* I can explain this . . . Come on over."

She opened her ship's outer lock. Hal lowered his space-tunnel into position, crossed into the girl's control room.* The place was littered with spectrometers, charts, maps, sextants, and Martian desert drawings. The girl was a slim, cool-looking piece attired in the prevailing space slacks of the time.

"What's the idea?" Hal inquired, eyeing her steadily.

Instead of answering she said,

"Yes, you're the Excellent Friend, all right. I've seen you enough times in the Museum. The Medical Wonder! The owner of Mars himself— Well, I'm trespassing all right, only it was quiet and empty of space police so I—" She shrugged. "So I just went on with my work."

"Spying for those damned folks back on Earth who are trying to kill me?" Hal asked bitterly. "Like the rest of these chiseling heels of 2120 you're—"

"I resent that!" she cried, her dark eyes blazing. "I'm no spy! I'm a student of cosmic hieroglyphics. Vilma Crandal is the name. You've heard of me, or my dad?"

"Frankly, no." Hal frowned. "Sorry I offended you. Space hieroglyphics? What's that to do with you being near my property?"

She nodded to the table, indicated the numberless drawings of Mars.

"Mars changes its canals a lot. You know that?"

"Sure. Alter all the time. So what?"

"My dad believed, and I believe, that the Martians used the canal system not for water but to convey a message to Earth. Their language being different to ours they used the only method understandable to scientists anywhere —geometry."

Hal stared at her, then he grinned. "Sounds screwy to me—"

"It isn't screwy!" she objected heatedly. "Evan Lowell, way back in your dim past hinted at it. Every week more or less, for centuries, the Martian *canali* undergo change in length and design, appear and disappear. The Martians knew exactly what changes would occur in the surface of their planet for generations after their decease and arranged it that the canals fell into predetermined shapes — geometrical shapes. Those shapes, traced back into the past, and followed to the present day, spell a message—an amazing message. My father and I made it our life's work to solve the meaning of it."

HAL stared down on the ocher planet. "But hang it, those marks don't even make sense!"

"Neither does shorthand until you understand it. Geometry is a language all its own—the science of magnitudes.

* Space Tunnel—A space "gang plank" entirely inclosed, extending from airlock to airlock of adjoining ships—folding up concertinawise when not in use.—Ed.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If you take the propositions postulated by the canal designs you arrive at logical conclusions. For instance, two parallel lines of same length and distance apart mean, obviously, the term 'Equal.' That's how it works . . ."

The girl stopped a moment, added seriously,

"Upward of ninety years Dad and I studied Mars. From the propositions we've learned how much Mars really contains, what a mastery of science the extinct Martians really had— Even today Mars contains vast scientific power deep in its bowels. They couldn't send messages to Earth by radio because at that time—when the Martians died out —Earth was not fully aware of radio power. Possibly nobody on the Earth has made cosmic hieroglyphics their specialty as Dad and I have. That is why I'm here, checking notes."

Hal rubbed his jaw.

"Perhaps there *are* others in on it," he said slowly. "It may account for certain factions trying to get Mars from me at all possible cost—"

He stopped and twirled around as the radio speaker came to life.

"Hey, there, Excellent Friend, we want a word with you! You'd better agree since we have your ship covered."

Hal looked grimly through the window onto the dirty space tramp he had seen following him for long enough.

"State your business!" he snapped into the mike.

"Withdraw that airlock tunnel then we will."

"Better," the girl said seriously. "I've no protective weapons on this ship. If these guys get tough, whoever they are, they'll make it hot for us."

She broke the magnetic contact holding the tunnel to Hal's ship and it folded back in place. The tramp drifted alongside, fanned out its own tunnel, then three men came into the control room. The foremost was Financier Dagnam. Behind him were two men with paralyzing guns in their hands at the ready.

"Surprised?" the financier asked dryly, then before Hal could reply he went on, "You shouldn't be. Way out in space here I am not compelled to cloak my actions as I was on Earth, surrounded as you were by laws, scientists, and state officials. You're a free man here and can take your chance . . ." He stopped, his piggy eyes glinting. "Not long ago I made you an offer for Mars. You will be well advised to accept it!"

"So it was you who tried to kill me on the traffic way!" Hal exploded. "I might have—"

"My orders were to have you kidnaped," Dagnam said curtly. "The scheme went wrong and the police intervened. It has meant my being forced to follow you out here to get you to sell Mars to me. You have no use for it—"

"Who says I haven't? Get the hell out of here, Dagnam, before I damn well—"

"Let us not waste time," the financier interrupted coldly. He planked a printed sheet down on the table, fingered a pen grimly. "On Earth," he said slowly, "I might have been forced to actually pay you the money stated—but not here. You will sign, because I have the guns."

"Supposing I let you shoot me instead?" Hal demanded grimly.

"That won't happen, my friend. You have placed yourself in a rather unfortunate position. Either you sign or this woman here dies, and her death will be on your conscience."

Hal hesitated and looked at the guns. He glanced at the girl and saw she was giving little shakes of her head.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It's a wonder a snake like you doesn't sink to forgery," Hal said bitterly, eyeing Dagnam's remorseless face.

"I'm not above it," he shrugged. "Only back on Earth you have signed too many documents since you awoke for me to escape with a forgery— Sign, damn you!" he blazed. "You're wasting time!"

HAL tightened his lips, then bent down to the table, apparently to append his signature— Instead he suddenly whirled up the heavy brass sextant with which the girl had been working and hurled it with terrific, unerring force at the nearest gunman.

He fell to the floor, dead-stunned as the instrument struck him a glancing blow on top of the head and then whizzed on its way into the switchboard. There was a violent purple flash—

Even as the missile traveled on its way Hal jumped, brought the startled other man down with a tackle, hurled his massive fist into his upturned face time and again until he sank back with bleeding mouth, his gun flying out of his hand.

Instantly the girl picked it up, tossed it over to Hal. He caught it deftly.

"Out!" he said between his teeth. "Go on, Dagnam—get out! And take your infernal paper with you—!" He hurled it in the magnate's flabby, vindictive face. Dagnam clutched it, crammed it in his pocket and headed for the airlock. A kick helped him on his way.

Without ceremony Hal bundled the two dazed and battered gunmen after him, fired one charge from the gun that sent them scuttling through the rest of the airlock tunnel back to their own ship.

"Okay, we get outa here," Hal said briefly to the girl, slamming the lock shut. "That ship of mine doesn't signify anyway. . ."

The girl closed a switch and the ship jolted—then she gave a cry of alarm.

"The switch! It's broken— Where the sextant hit it!"

Hal leaped to her side, stared at the smashed wiring.

"What—what happens?" he gulped.

"It fires the forward tubes. If those don't fire as well as the back jets we'll never pull free of Mars' gravity field— we're falling now!" the girl cried hoarsely, as the ship moved a little way and then began to twirl oddly, moving slowly down toward the vast ocher landscape below. With seconds whipping by, it gathered momentum.

Hal felt himself sweat with sudden fear. He set to work to try and replace the wiring, gave it up as hopeless. It would take hours. The girl cut off the power, but the damage was done now. Faster and faster the ship fell out of the anchor-field over the deadline and the ocher wilderness rose to meet them.

The girl tensed, biting her lip—then almost at the limit of their headlong dive she gave the rearward tubes everything they had. In that maneuver she succeeded for the ship twirled and lifted her nose sideways, struck the sand in a long gouging sweep, tore along in it for a space, then halted.

"Nice going!" Hal breathed, straightening up.

The girl gave a relieved nod. "Thought that last bit might do it. What we have to do now is fix this wiring and then—"

"It can wait," Hal said, looking through the port. "Dagnam and his boys are heading voidwards; evidently think we went to destruction. Now we've landed on this darned planet of mine I want to be sure exactly why Dagnam is so anxious about it.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Is it that he knows of Martian secrets buried in it, or is it the secret I once found—? How much do you know of Mars' surface, Miss Crandal?"

"From personal contact, nothing. Private property, remember."

Hal grinned crookedly.

"Pity other people haven't your sense of honesty. Let's see—" He studied the gages. "Air thin but breathable, just. Temperature seventy. Hm-m, good enough. And we're three miles from the spot I want—Cynia Oasis. Okay, lock that stuff of yours away in case unwelcome factions find it—"

"I'll take the principal charts with me," she said briefly. "If Dagnam returns I'll leave nothing from which he can benefit."

She stuffed a collapsible roll of prints and charts into the belt pocket on her waist, then nodded to the airlock. Hal gripped the solitary paralyzer-gun more firmly and followed her.

CHAPTER III

Slow Motion Life

AS they ploughed along together through the sand, accustoming themselves to the lesser gravity, Hal said,

"Look here, Miss Crandal—or is it Vilma now we know each other better? —you know plenty about Earth whereas I was just flung into it. What's the setup? I mean, who's supposed to rule the cities and the countries?"

"In every country save Merica—that's where you and I hail from—money alone is in control," she answered. "Capitalism won the fight after the Scientific War, except in our country. There we have the Presidential form of Government, with finance striving hard to overthrow it. Dagnam is one of those who is trying to oust a political Government and set up a monetary one, like other countries have. If he could only get the wealth he needs—even if only in solid gold—he could rule the country. But gold can only be bought in hard cash from other countries and planets. Therefore the one with most gold is nominally the big shot of the lot."

Hal reflected. "Rather like our Twentieth Century setup used to be, only now it's on clearer lines. Seems to me Dagnam is a guy to be wary of. Obviously he—"

Pausing, he pointed ahead.

"There, that sand and rock ridge. In it there's the entrance to an underground cave. I found it before I went to sleep— Come on."

The girl followed him through a narrow opening in the hard rock, right into the ridge itself, lowered herself down a stony slope into Hal's waiting arms. The dim sunlight filtering in revealed an immense internal cave hanging with numberless stalactites.

"This is it all right," Hal said grimly, as he and the girl fingered the rock inquisitively. "I took some of these stalactite rocks back to Earth. I must have been followed and they were stolen from me. Since nothing's been heard of them since I presume they were no good. . . ."

"What did you think they were, anyway?" the girl asked.

"My instruments said heavy water crystals.* The rock gives off emanations, I know that. I carried my samples in steel tongs at arms' length until I felt sure they wouldn't hurt me. On Earth I carried them under my arm."

* Heavy Water—Produced by electrolysis, especially solar power passing through tenuous atmosphere. Heavy water possesses more electrons than normal water, is an isotope. Its powers, according to science, are mainly medicinal and produce different results according to dosage.—Ed.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A startled look began to form on the girl's face.

"But heavy water crystals might be valuable—for all kinds of things! They arrest ketabolism for one thing—that is age. In concentrate form they can be powerful drugs. Heavy water crystals is right!" she went on. "Martian water would be electrolyzed by the weak atmospheric blanket, would sink down here from the oasis in heavy water form. . . Maybe Dagnam knows a thing or two, at that!"

"Mebbe . . ." Hal was wandering thoughtfully around the cave. He came up suddenly against the opposite wall and gave a shout.

"Hey, Vil! For Pete's sake come and take a look here!"

Hurrying to his side the girl started in surprise at discovering an inlet square of immensely thick glass. But beyond the glass was yet another cavern, furnished incredibly enough after the style of a hospital ward! There were earthly tables, chairs, instruments, beds, and a dully glowing ceiling lamp, apparently of radium origin, allowing just sufficient light for visibility.

This was not all. In the place were six men, Earthmen, clad in light one-piece tunics. They lay or sat in all manner of positions, motionless apparently. Some were bald, and all were over middle age.

"What—what *is* this?" Hal gasped. "Business man's waxworks?"

"Good Lord, I know some of these men, by sight!" Vilma cried. "There's Millpont, the famous financier, for one— And Valcane, the big broker!" Her voice broke with excitement. "And that fat man there is DeManyon, about the biggest chain store merchant in Merica— Wait, something comes back to me! While you were asleep Hal all these men here announced their intention of retiring. Then they dropped out of sight—to *here*, obviously!"

"Are they dead?" Hal stared in bewilderment.

THEY were silent for a while, watching intently. It seemed too incredible, but with the moments the men were seen to alter position very slightly, an alternation as infinitesimal as the movement of the distant stars.

"No, they're not dead," the girl whispered. "They're *slowed down!*"

"Men in slow motion!" Hal breathed. "*Now* I begin to see the light! This is Dagnam's doing! I told you that heavy water rock gives off emanations. Way back in the past it was stolen from me, probably by some predecessor of Dagnam's. They found out that it was the emanations of the rock that made me sleep for a hundred and fifty years. *That's* what the explanation is. Those guys closest to me back on Earth, like Nilicot my adviser, knew all about it—But Dagnam kept them quiet. Probably they figured I'd never wake up—"

"Then these men—?" the girl asked breathlessly.

"It's obvious! Dagnam, or somebody before him, traced the stuff back to this cave. They used it, probably as concentrate. Of their own accord these men here have been dosed with concentrate. They may not wake up for centuries. Suppose they left behind them certain investments to accrue with time—? When they wake up they'll be as incredibly wealthy—wealthier—than I found myself! You say they only retired. Okay—their holdings remain firm until they reappear or death can be proved. A racket!" Hal whistled. "A sanatorium for businessmen! Financial power in pickle! Wow!"

"You recovered, proved obstinate, so

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dagnam's got to get this planet from you at all cost," the girl mused. "Yes, I believe you are right. And he relied on the general honesty of other people to keep this place secret—and it's worked! We—"

She stopped, suddenly staggered a little.

"Something wrong?" Hal caught her anxiously.

"Just—just darned sleepy, that's all." She looked vaguely surprised. "I guess it must be this thin air—"

She shook herself, yawned widely, then stopped half way and swung to the cave opening at a sudden sound. Three figures dropped into view—Dagnam and his two gunmen. Instantly Hal's hand flew to the gun he'd thrust in his belt but Dagnam's voice rang out.

"Better not, Bailey! I'm in no mood for games this time!"

Dagnam came forward with a grim face, halted.

"Good job we watched what happened through the telescope after your ship cracked up," he commented briefly. "Right now you know just a bit too much about my affairs . . ." His cold eyes slanted to the girl as he thrust out the sheet of paper Hal had hurled at him on the spaceship. "This time I'll take no chances. Sign! That is all I need. You can talk yourself black proving otherwise back on Earth. I'll have you taped by then— Come on, Bailey, sign! Or this girl dies. I'm no joker!"

"I'll be—" Hal checked himself, suddenly conscious of a vast wave of weariness billowing over him. He fought against it with all his strength as for a moment Dagnam and his gunmen seemed to recede into a distant mist.

"Get busy!" the financier roared, holding out a pen.

Furious, he lunged out with his fist, sent Hal spinning to the sandy floor. Hal fought his way up again, trying to figure out what had gone wrong with him. Life seemed to be ebbing from him in a tide. He hardly felt the brutal blows Dagnam rained time and again into his face. Only his dinning command—"Sign!" penetrated his brain.

Numbly, he took the pen. With the cave spinning round him he scrawled his signature, twisted his head to stare at the girl where she was held against the wall at the gunpoint.

"Okay," Dagnam said briefly. "Pay the account, boys. Use the ordinary revolvers—no taking chances with paralysis or rays."

Hal jerked his head up in alarm as the gunmen backed away. Half-way back up the cave they paused, leveled their guns and fired—once, twice. . .

Hal stared in blank horror as he saw the girl crumple in a limp heap to the floor. Then to the accompaniment of another gun explosion he felt a dull, numb pain in his chest.

His exhaustion was complete. Darkness flowed over him.

THROUGHOUT a period of duration he could only guess at, Hal was aware of slight movements, of patched-up events as brief and odd as those of a nightmare. In a half-formed way they reminded him of his one hundred fifty-year sleep. Then all of a sudden he recovered consciousness.

Once more that feeling of receding cramp, of life pouring back into his limbs. Hunger gripped him.

He sat up abruptly, blinking in the wavering glow of volcanic light. He was in some kind of inner cave that went as far as he could see. In every direction sprouted bushes of livid green, their branches laden with heavy, vivid-colored fruits like peaches. It was cool down here; the air sucked into the planet's core, was fresh. The plants, dry

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

soil specimens, flourished obviously by absorbing what water vapor remained in the air.

"What the heck . . .?" Hal rubbed his face, noted in amazement the vast beard he had grown. His hair too was down to his shoulders.

He stared around him again, then started as he saw the sprawled figure of the girl stirring slightly. At the same moment, seeing her threadbare clothes, he became aware that he himself was in tatters. For some reason his tough space togs were worn out. He made hasty readjustments to what remained then scrambled dizzily to his feet.

"Vilma!" he cried, shaking her bare shoulder. "Vil, wake up!"

She moved again at that, opened her eyes. For a long time she looked bemusedly around, then as her faculties returned she scooped her torn clothes more tightly about her and stared at Hal's bearded face.

"What—what happened?" she breathed.

"Search me," he replied worriedly. "Last thing I remember was being shot at. Dunno how we got here . . . Up you get!"

He raised her to her feet, then he felt his chest thoughtfully.

"Right here," he said slowly, "is something hard. It must be the bullet Dagnam's gunman fired at me— You should have a couple in you somewhere."

"I have," she said, fingering herself. "They ought to have killed us—but they didn't! I seem to remember I was half asleep—Hal, what's happened to us? Where are we on Mars?" She caught at him anxiously.

"Something has happened that I hardly dare think about," he said in an awed voice. "We made a mistake in handling those heavy water stalacites as we did. The emanations must have gotten into our bloodstream and slowed down our faculties—just as it happened to me before when I was fool enough to carry the rock without protection. The bullets didn't kill us because death relies on the speed at which a shock can be assimilated. With us the shock was infinitely protracted, so we didn't die . . .

"We moved," he breathed, astounded. "We followed Nature's law and looked subconsciously for stimulant. We needed precious little, but still *some*. As if in a stupor we must have moved from our cave to here . . . Here there is fruit. If we follow our trail back we'll no doubt come to our cave—"

"From our clothes and your Rasputin beard, it's some time," Vilma said. "Let's take a look."

Hal turned to the nearest fruit bush, snapped off a partly dried branch and thrust it in the volcanic flame spouting out of the rocks. Thus armed with a torch they searched around until they found a small single opening. It led through a long tunnel with a sandy floor.

"Notice?" Hal exclaimed, triumphantly. "Gouged tracks in the sand where we've dragged ourselves along with infinite slowness. Blind animal instinct replacing normal reasoning, as it naturally must if the faculties are slowed up."

The girl nodded but said nothing. Hal realized that, like him, she was oppressed by the awesome thought of the time that must have slipped by in the interval.

For an hour they went on, twisting and turning through the single narrow passage.

It brought them out finally into the very cave where they had met the bullets of Dagnam's gunmen, seemingly so short a time before.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER IV

Martian Strategy

SILENT, they looked at the wall of the cave where they had last seen illumined glass. Now it was powdered with sandy dust and behind it all was dark and quiet.

"They've gone," Hal said, shrugging, then as he looked about him, "And they've taken tons of stalactite material with them! Look at the amount of stuff they've broken off—!"

Vilma nodded slowly, then they went together to the cave exit and stared out onto the Martian night sky. Cold wind blew about them, set them shuddering.

Earth was there over the desert, a tiny green ball. Then as she studied the winking constellations the girl turned suddenly and seized Hal's arm.

"Do you realize how long we've been crawling and eating?" she asked breathlessly.

"Some time, I guess. I can't judge it exactly—"

"I can, from the stars— It's about two hundred years!"

"What!"

"It's right," she insisted seriously. "In all that time we've passed a slow motion existence. We've been veritable lotus eaters. In two hundred years all we've done is move to lower quarters of Mars and eat fruit—"

"But what's happened on Earth during this time?" Hal cried. "Do you realize—"

"I realize that more of the stalactites have been taken, obviously for use by the revived industrialists who by this time must surely be veritable masters of the world. They probably wondered where we went to— That doesn't signify. We're still here, alive . . . "

"Yeah, and little good it does us!" Hal stared over the mournfully empty desert. "Either your space ship was taken away long ago or else it's covered in sand. We're alone, Vil— Lost!"

"Not quite," she said quietly. "Don't forget the Martian civilization, or what's left of it, still lies deep inside Mars. I know enough to find my way to it. Original notes are gone of course, but my memory still serves me. Come on, we've got to find a way down to this planet's very core. It's our last chance. There may be stuff there to help us escape."

TOGETHER they made their way back to the underground cavern, refreshed themselves with the curious tasting fruit—then they lighted more torches and started a careful exploration. It was not long before the girl found an immense volcanic fissure extending into the depths.

"Okay, let's go." Hal said grimly. "We can't go up so let's go down."

They descended cautiously, slipping down precipitous lengths at times, barking their bare feet on loose pieces of rock, but gradually descending ever lower into the sponge of a world. Down here, as the fissures linked right through the planet, there was a tremendous draft, cold and cutting.

It was also a region of more and more volcanic light from the nearly extinct fires in the core. They flashed and rumbled incessantly but without any promise of becoming dangerous. In the cave in which the two finally dropped—indeed it was far more than a cave, it was the vast root core of Mars itself—there was an awesome quality. Its silence was broken only by the muffled thunder of internal explosion, its darkness by the stabbing lights that threw distorted shadows. And at its far end, gleaming where the light struck it, were two vast doors of black metal.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"This is it!" the girl cried exultantly. "The last habitat of the Martians! In the transcripted message it said thought waves alone can open those doors—the thought wave of the first proposition in Euclid—"

"What a hope!" Hal groaned.

"I think I can do it," the girl retorted. "Maybe you forget I've spent my life—or *did* spend my life—on the problem. Now quit talking and let me concentrate . . . "

For a long time she stood staring at the doors, concentrating with brows down. Time and again she failed—then just as Hal was giving it up as hopeless there came out of the rumbling stillness a series of clicking noises. With the creak of untold age the doors began to move, parted up the center, sent forth a belch of curiously exotic air like that from an Eastern tomb.

Within, the atmosphere was breathable but oddly tainted. It clung to the nostrils of Hal and the girl as they stepped cautiously into the hallowed reaches. The reflected light from the volcanic cavern shone on incredibly intricate mechanisms operating the doors.

Silently they went on to a wilderness of machines cloaked in thick, dust-caked grease.

"Yes, this is it," the girl whispered. "The Monte Cristo of Mars—the last inventions of Martian science waiting for those who could read the signs of the *canali*. And we've got them!"

"Yeah . . . " Hal felt he had to subdue his voice. "Where do we start?" he went on. "I don't begin to understand the setup. Anyway, there'll be no power—"

"Not of the sort we know of, perhaps—but scientists as clever as the Martians probably used solar power—like we used to use on earth for solar cars two hundred years ago. Let's look around."

AN hour later, with the girl's knowledge of advanced machines and Martian signs, they tabulated their findings. All power was clearly governed by an immense self-contained power unit connected with the roof—and thence presumably to some point on the exterior where the sun's power could reach it.

"Telescopic devices, space radio, transmutational machines, synthesis apparatus, the whole shoot—" Hal said.

"All linking to the central switchboard and robot controlled from there," the girl nodded. "Let's see what we get."

Rather nervously she went to work on the switches. It took some time to find the right combination, but foolproof devices prevented any disastrous mistakes, and suddenly there came a throbbing of power from the immense storage resources.

"It works!" Hal cried excitedly. "Nice going!"

Between them they went to work on the radio television apparatus, fished around for an interval before they transformed the blur on the screen into a view of the heavens, and presently to a picture of Earth perfectly mirrored by the X-ray devices—

It was a changed Earth—a different Earth from anything they had ever known. Where New York had stood there now sprawled a city which covered the entire American continent. New York *was* America, apparently. Across the oceans on other lands reposed similar giant cities, covering every country. They were traced out with roadways and countless lines of communication; the seas were thick with craft, the air jostling with bullet-fast air machines.

"Things have kinda grown," Hal said somberly. "Doesn't get us away from here either. Seems the Martians hadn't

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mastered space travel in spite of being good scientists—or if they did they took darned good care to leave no clues for us."

The girl fiddled with the radio apparatus, at last got it tuned to an ultra short Earth wavelength. Most of the announcements failed to make much sense, except that there was constant reference to the "grace of the Merica World State." Everything, it appeared, was done by its consent.

"In other words, Merica has got a grip on the whole world and is the dominating State." Hal said thoughtfully. "That kind of adds up. Those industrialists returned, claimed their accumulated money, and thereby became the wealthiest men on Earth, buying everybody else out. Dagnam, we presume, is either dead or in pickle for the future."

Vilma nodded slowly, thinking, then she looked at the radio quickly as another announcement came forth.

"By the grace of the Merica World State it is announced that the appeal for commercial help by the controllers of Europa State cannot be granted. In these days of financial control, Merica holds the largest gold reserve in the world and is thereby dictator of policy by common consent. The Merica World State, under the control of Exchequer Chancellor Millpont, therefore considers—"

THE communication faded out, blurred with space static. Hal switched off, looked at the girl inquiringly.

"Millpont, huh? One of the pickled industrialists who was on Mars here. And the rest will be around him . . . " Hal clenched his fist. "It's the very devil! A money juggernaut backed by gold, able to enforce its will on the world until somebody with greater wealth and gold turns up! And what can we do? Nothing! Even if we could get back to Earth we'd be no better off. A bulk of a planet like this—"

"And your own wealth accumulated with two hundred years," the girl pointed out. "Don't forget that! You must by now be enormously wealthy and as long as you are alive the law remains. Not even Millpont can alter that."

"Yeah," Hal sighed. "But still way behind buying him out."

The girl was silent, wandering around the machinery. Then she halted and said slowly. "I *wonder* . . . !"

"Huh? Wonder what?"

"These transmutational machines here," she said slowly—then suddenly making up her mind she closed the transmutator power switches. Giant tubes flared into life for a moment and they both stared in awe at the display, watched the battering onslaught of energies clashing in fiery grandeur in the transparent mutational chamber.

"Anything into anything!" the girl said, studying the hieroglyphics on the chart attached to the machine. "Here there are one hundred elements of which we know only ninety-two—but they're in the same Periodic Weight. That's natural, anyway. And the corresponding switch numbers are shown—Hal!" Her voice sharpened eagerly. "This chart can help us change anything into anything else—lead into gold, for instance. Look, I'll show you!"

She picked up a lead cube from the adjoining container and put it in the transmutational chamber, closed the appropriate switch. A battering hail of complex forces descended on the cube. It began to glow, changed color as it formed fresh atomic units. Automatically the power at last cut itself out and there remained a block that shone dull yellow.

"Gold!" Hal yelled. "It is gold!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Vil, we've got to contact Earth by radio and tell 'em Millpont isn't the richest power, that this so called hulk of a planet is—"

"And have Millpont see to it that you never use your secret? Oh no!" The girl shook her head. "We fight fire with fire here, Hal. We can't get away from here—so Millpont and sundry others will come to us!"

"Are you crazy?" Hal shouted. "It's asking for it. Once it is known we can manufacure gold *et al* in this place we—"

The girl interrupted him, went across to the radio, began to fiddle for Earth transmission waves again.

"Leave it to me," she said, smiling faintly. "You may be a good space man but you're a rotten business man—" She made more adjustments, intoned her voice into the microphone. "Mars calling Earth! Urgent message! Mars calling Earth!"

AFTER a long interval Earth replied. The announcer sounded mystified.

"Earth replying. What apparatus are you using to speak from Mars?"

The girl ignored the question.

"Here is a message for the Merica World State, and Chancellor Millpont in particular. Mars is in extreme danger of being annexed by unfriendly powers and it is essential that Chancellor Millpont and the head of every other State in the world come to Mars immediately to determine preventative measures. I am a member of the Space Secret Service, marooned on Mars, and I have discovered this amazing plot. I await reply."

There was a long interval, then,

"Chancellor Millpont concedes to your request, extends his cordial thanks for your promptness. How will he contact you?"

"Cynia Oasis. I will be waiting. . ."

The girl switched off, smiled grimly. Hal looked at her in some puzzlement.

"And when he comes?"

"You'll see," she said briefly. "In the meantime we're going to make some clothes with the synthetic machine, hunt up what arms we can to protect ourselves—though I have an idea it won't be necessary—and you're going to tell me the whole story of your life from the time you awoke in 2120 up to meeting me. . . Let's get started."

MANY Martian days and nights passed before Hal and Vilna, watching from their cave entrance, sighted the approaching Earth fleet. It landed close to the oasis and a party of eight men finally emerged, began to walk toward Hal and Vilna as they signaled their presence.

The bald-headed Millpont stared at the ill-dressed two amazedly.

"Are *you* S.S.S. agents?" he cried. "Or is this some damned joke? If there's been a trick—"

"No trick," Hal said calmly. "Follow us, gentlemen, if you please."

Wonderingly, not a little irritably indeed when it came to the long descent into Mars' bowels, the men followed Hal and the girl. Once in the vast Martian power-hall they gazed around in mystified awe.

Suddenly Millpont harrumphed loudly and cocked a grim eye on the girl.

"Presumably you sent the message," he said. "It was a woman's voice, I am told. Well, where's the danger?"

The girl ignored the inquiry. Composedly, she asked a question.

"Just what countries do you gentlemen represent?"

They looked at each other, then Millpont gestured impatiently.

"There are no countries! You should know that! There are only cities, owned and controlled by the grace of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Merica—" He stopped, his jaws setting. "Just what are you two doing on this planet? It is private property and—"

"In other words," the girl said, eyeing the other quiet-faced men, "you are under the heel of this man and his city of Merica?"

There was a slow nodding of heads. One said gravely.

"Financial power backed by gold is the ruler of the Earth, therefore Merica is the legal master."

Vilma smiled crookedly, looked at Millpont.

"What gave you the idea, Millpont, that you own this planet? It was bought—or rather stolen by force—from one Hal Bailey nearly two hundred years or so ago."

"It is on record that it was bought," Millpont retorted. "The Hal Bailey person died or something. Look here, what *is* this?" he roared suddenly. "Why did you ask us here anyway?"

"Shut up, and listen!" Hal was speaking now. "Hal Bailey was one of the richest men in Earth at the time of his supposed death, was he not? Where did his property go? Nobody could use it until his death was proven. That's the law. Right, gentlemen?"

The others nodded again firmly.

"Bailey's death was proved to the hilt!" Millpont snorted. "His property was confiscated by the State then, according to law—"

"Then it's going to be tough on you," Hal said grimly. "I'm Hal Bailey myself, and I can prove it in any way you want once I get back to Earth! I was robbed, cheated, shot at! I lay for two hundred years with this girl here in slow motion— Yeah, that pricks, doesn't it? Slow motion! Just the way you and your pet industrialists passed the time away while the interest mounted up—"

Millpont hesitated, his eyes glittering.

"You'll never prove anything—and you're not Bailey! You—"

"A MOMENT," one of the men interposed. "It has never been quite understood how Millpont and his colleagues succeeded in gaining such a legal hold over vast sums of money. Do you suggest that they used some scientific method to get a start on us—"

"I'm not suggesting, man—I'm *telling!*" Hal roared. "I own Mars, always have. It was stolen by Dagnam from me. In spite of my signature, in spite of everything, I demand restitution for this! I'll make you pay for this, Millpont! I'll drag the story of heavy water crystals through every damned State on Earth! I'll blast your whole rotten setup! You're going to give me back Mars and my estate in money— But especially Mars! Understand?"

"One moment," Millpont said, calming. "There will be endless difficulties in trying to sort out your legal title to the estate you had two hundred years ago—nor do I believe for a moment you would be able to gainsay the signature you gave making Mars over to us, or at least to Dagnam. Suppose we were to compromise? Suppose I take your word for it regarding Mars and you leave the matter of your accrued inheritance alone?"

"What! Not on your life—"

"It would be—safer," Millpont said gravely.

"Yeah, you mean you'd bump me off before I could make a claim at all, huh?"

"Hardly that—but calamities befall all of us sometimes. You are a business man, and so am I. Strategically Mars is worth as much as your estate if you will communicate with the Venusian

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Government. They are anxious to buy."

"Boloney!" Hal said frankly. "You mean it's an old hulk and you are glad to get rid of it! You've gotten all the minerals you want, sucked it drier than a lemon—"

"You still have these machines," Millpont shrugged. "I am willing for you to have everything on this planet in return for your silence concerning your legal claim."

Hal hesitated, glanced at the girl. She closed one eye solemnly.

"Okay," Hal said briefly. "I'll do it."

"Good!" Millpont motioned his waxen faced secretary and he went to work on a portable printer. Within a minute Millpont held forth a printed transfer of sale, signed it with a flourish. Hal did likewise and the other men appended their signatures.

Millpont smiled gravely.

"You are not a very good business man, my friend," he sighed. "However, now it is done it is your—"

"I haven't finished yet!" Hal retorted, as the group turned to go. "I've something to add. Now I own Mars—to which you are all witnesses—I intend to buy Merica as well!"

"You—what?" Millpont asked deliberately.

"How much do you want?" Hal demanded. "Name a price! Any price—as high as you like!"

—"You're crazy," Millpont said sourly. "Besides, there is no price! All the gold reserve in the Solar System could not—"

"In a world given over to financial domination everything has a price!" Hal shouted. "Take a look at this if you doubt my capital!"

HE nodded to the girl and she slammed the switch on the transmutational machine. Millpont, indeed all the men, watched with popping eyes as blocks of lead, copper, tin, iron, and so forth fell forth to the rack as pure gold.

"What the—" Millpont gasped. Then he burst into a roar. "By God, this is trickery! Damned, infernal—"

"I'm the business man, Millpont, not you!" Hal grinned. "Now you see! Mars is an old hulk, is it? The richest planet in the System, that's what it is! Wealth without end— And I own it! Gentlemen, you are my witnesses! I can outbuy Millpont here, outbuy anybody!"

"We'll see if you will!" Millpont shouted, then before anybody could stop him he plunged forward and drove his fist through the glass into the transmutation chamber, grabbed at the lead block forming slowly into gold.

Almost instantly he staggered back, dragging his apparently numbed arm clear. In some odd way the gold block was cloying to his fingers, spreading a yellowish tinge into his hand—assimilating with his flesh! For a second or two he stood in mute anguish while the others looked on, thunderstruck. Then he crashed over to the floor, rigid, his whole gross body twisting and shuddering tremendously as the transmutational powers surged through him.

"He's—he's turning into gold!" one of the men whispered.

"It's the energy that does it," the girl said quietly. "He tried to seize it at the point of change and the energy of change passed into him as well. This transmutator changes anything into anything. Millpont loved gold, I guess—and he sure got it!"

The others were silent, staring at the gilded image cloaked in a suit upon the floor.

"I think, gentlemen, the issue is decided for us anyway," Hal said quietly. "We had better return to Earth and make our arrangements. Mars hence-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forth is the master planet. I do not have to tell you that no domination will be sought—"

He caught the girl's arm as she came up. She smiled at him.

"Sure was a lucky day for me when I bought Mars," he murmured. "Only day to improve on it was the one when I met you."

"There's still one more to beat them both, if you like," she said naively, then they turned together and followed the Earth delegates out of the hall.

The End.

The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

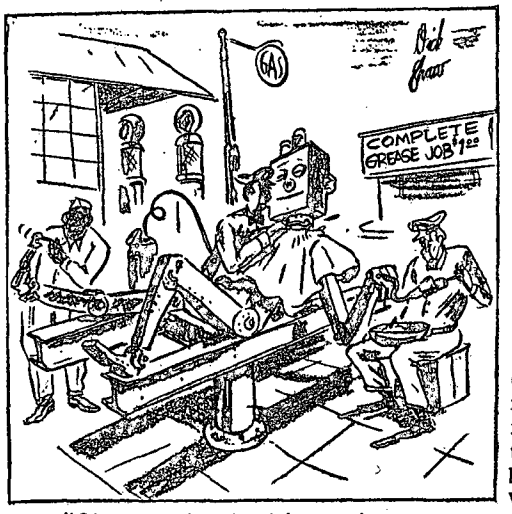
(Concluded from page 5)

RECENTLY we dug up a fantastic document (out of our files, not out of the ground!). It was a Roman menu. It's worth passing on!

While not necessarily supernatural, the quantity and variety of food the stout Roman businessmen put away at their little get-togethers borders on the fantastic.

ACCORDING to Cimon Africanus' "History (of Roman gastronomy)", in 67 B. C. Lucinius Procmius, a leading army contractor, served the following menu to three colleagues while discussing a merger:

Olives, dormice, wild honey, fried suckling, poppy seeds, baked lamb chops, damsons, pomegranate grains, stewed brains of bird, peafowls' eggs, peppers, ram's head pie, roast beef, kidneys, lambs fry, African dates, cheese cakes, sea fish, hare, lobster, goose, mullets, honeycomb, bread with crushed fig, cucumber, Syrian dates, Theban (Greek) dates, frozen drops of Spanish honey, endive, jellied apples, pears, pudding sausage, strawberries, peaches, nuts, cream cheese, grape jelly, snails, chutterlings, stewed livers, pickled turnips, kidney beans, salted olives, thrushes in pastry with chopped nuts, quinces, oyster and scallops.



"Gimme a simonize job too, boys. I gotta date with a leadhead tonight."

Naturally, you will say, all this required an aid to digestion. So here's what they drank.

THREE jugs of wine of Araby, one jug of Chinese cordial, two jugs of Syrian thick wine, one jug of Greek wine, two jugs of Roman wine, five large jugs of Frankish beer, one large jug of Egyptian beer, two jugs of light Spanish wine, and one jug of barley water!

No wonder the Roman Empire fell! We'd say it passed out!

WHAT makes Friday such an evil day in the superstitions of many people? Now take these instances (for instance) and see what you think. Each one is a fortunate fact, rather than unfortunate, and if there's anything to the dread of Friday, it's all wet on this scale!

On Friday, August 3rd, 1492, Columbus sailed from Spain; on Friday, October 12th he first sighted the New World; he started homeward on Friday, January 4th, 1493, and reached Palos, his starting point, on Friday, March 14th.

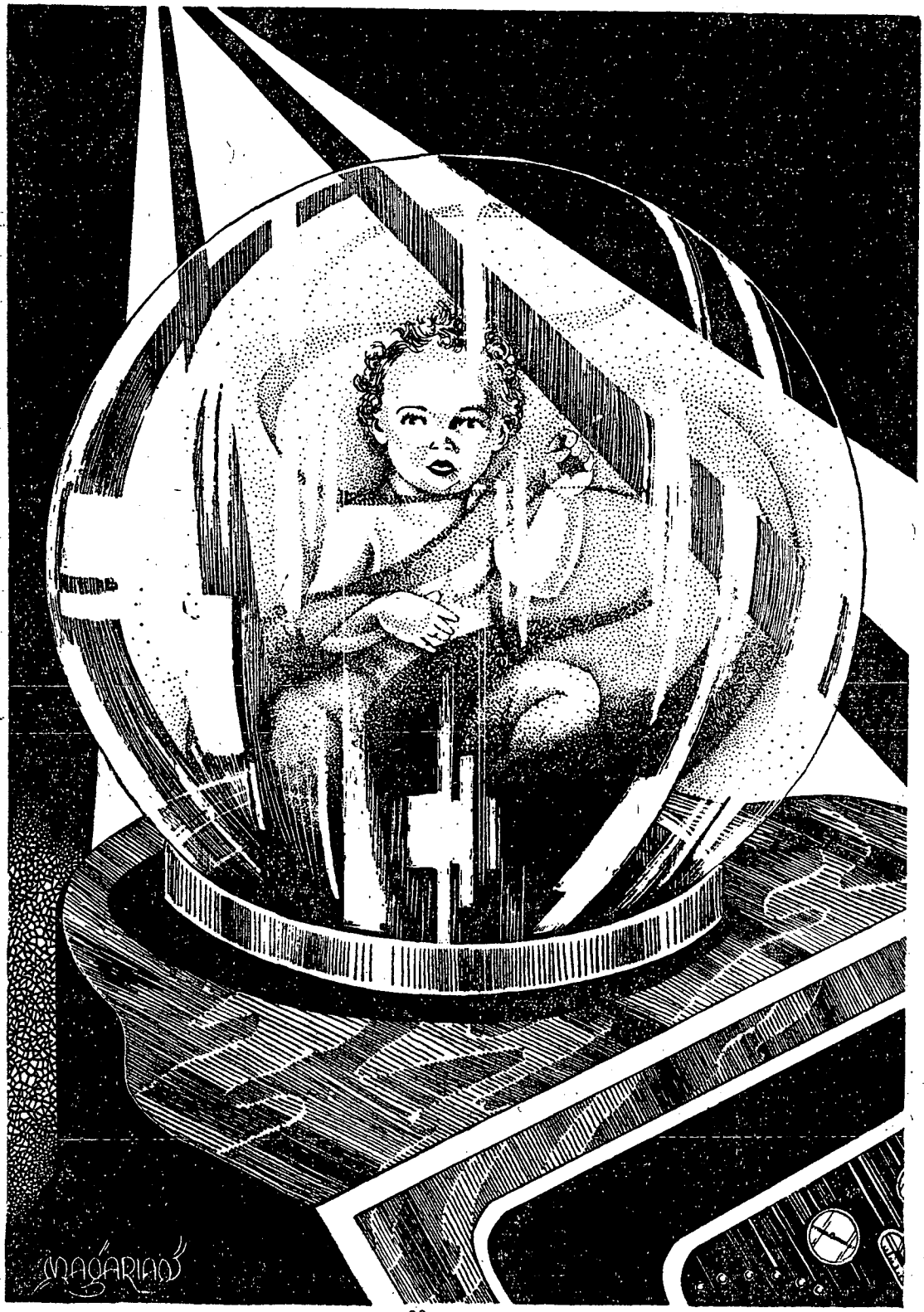
Columbus first reached the coast of South America on a Friday, June 12th, 1494; Giovanni Coboto, otherwise John Cabot who discovered Canada, received his commission from King Henry VIII on a Friday, March 5th, 1496; St. Augustine, Florida, the oldest town in the United States, was settled on a Friday, September 7th, 1565; the father of our country, George Washington, was born on a Friday, February 22nd, 1732.

On a Friday, October 17th, 1777, General Gates defeated the British commander, Burgoyne at the famous battle of Saratoga; on Friday, September 19th, 1781, General Washington defeated Lord Cornwallis; on Friday, July 7th, 1776, John Adams demanded before Congress the recognition of the seccession of the American colonies.

Friday looks pretty good to us! So why the fuss? Incidentally, we're writing this on Friday!

BEFORE we forget, Edgar Rice Burroughs has another John Carter yarn in the June AMAZING STORIES. It's called "The Black Pirates of Barsoom" and it's on the stands now. If you like Burroughs, take a hint and get this one now. It's really a fine bit of work, and takes you right back to the Valley Dor, the First Born, and all the familiar scenes of "The Gods of Mars"!—*Rap.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMAZONS of a Weird Creation

by
JEP
POWELL

There was something decidedly wrong about this future world; there were no men in it, only hateful old women

A WATER glass crashed into the spotless wall of a private room in Atlanta's City Hospital.

"I got him!" whooped Spud Harris. "Pick him up, Nursie, and bring him to me."

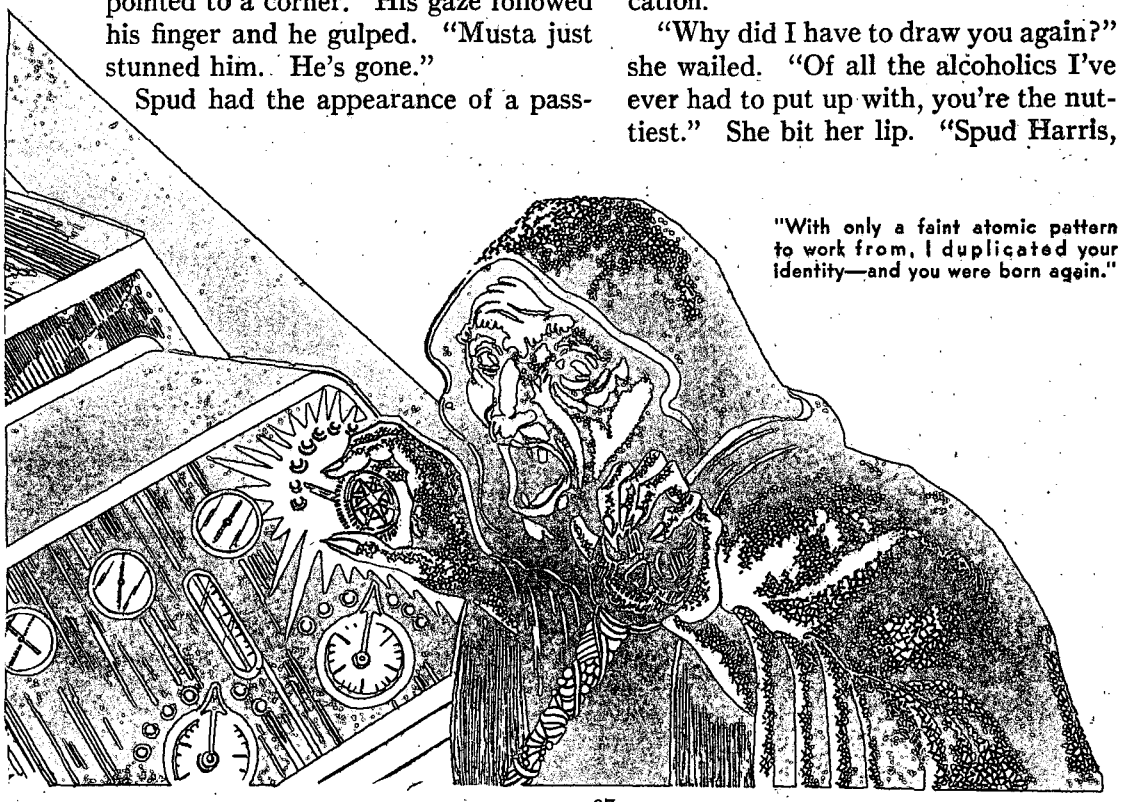
"Got who?" demanded a pretty but exasperated nurse.

"That damn turtle that was crawlin' up the wall. There he . . ." Spud pointed to a corner. His gaze followed his finger and he gulped. "Musta just stunned him. He's gone."

Spud had the appearance of a passably handsome former football star who had tried to cram too much living into forty years. His reddish-brown hair was tousled; his grey eyes bloodshot. He needed a shave. Spud had been plying himself with liquid courage, preparatory to starting a perilous Time flight into the Thirtieth Century. He had plied assiduously.

The nurse made a gesture of deprecation.

"Why did I have to draw you again?" she wailed. "Of all the alcoholics I've ever had to put up with, you're the nuttiest." She bit her lip. "Spud Harris,



"With only a faint atomic pattern to work from, I duplicated your identity—and you were born again."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

why don't you snap out of it? You used to be a swell sports writer, but now look at you. You'll wind up in the wacky house if . . ."

"Look, Toots," Spud interrupted. "Call up the Times and ask for the sports desk. Tell Luke Gordon I'll be in Monday, sure. What day is this?"

"Tuesday," she said acidly. "Also your wife's been calling here. What do you want me to tell her?"

A prodigious shudder shook his already jittery, lank frame. Molly opposed his drinking; sometimes vociferously, sometimes violently.

Three reporters pushed past a protesting floor superintendent and barged into the room.

"They're waiting for you down at the lab, you lug," one of them bellowed at Spud. "Climb outa that rear-entrance kimono and into some duds. We got a cab waiting. Where's his clothes, Nurse?"

HALF an hour later a handful of skeptical scientists and several derisive reporters and photogs were gathered in Dr. Amos Pipp's laboratory to watch a senile inventor and a rum-soaked sports writer hurled a thousand years into the future; maybe into Eternity.

Dr. Pipp surveyed the group, tugged at his wispy white goatee, and spoke pontifically.

"Gentlemen, before Mr. Harris and I embark on our epoch-making journey, I'll explain for the benefit of some of you that Time does not fly, as we are wont to say. It doesn't even creep; doesn't move at all. Time is static and we move through it. Everything moves through it. Everything that ever was or ever will be, now is somewhere out there in Time. . . ."

"Hold it, Professor," cut in Duffy of the News. "I don't savvy. You mean I'm already dead? That my first kid is already born? That . . .?"

"Please!" Dr. Pipp barked petulantly. "I'll simplify it this way. Let us compare our normal passage through Time to traveling along an unfamiliar highway across the continent. Every city and town, every river, every mountain already is along the route. They just don't become real to us until we reach them—but they're there all the time. Now Mr. Harris and I will leave you at this point on the road of Time, speed on by faster vehicle, make observations, then return to meet you a short distance ahead. Simple, isn't it?"

No one agreed.

"Look, Doc, why go tearing through ten centuries?" another reporter asked. "Why not just take a little test hop or something, say a year or two ahead?"

"The power required to project us into the future will not permit us to stop so soon. While the principle is different, this may give you an idea. The power required to force a rifle bullet through a barrel smaller than itself sends the bullet far beyond the muzzle . . ."

"I get it," a photog declared. "You and Spud gonna be fired like a couple of human cannon balls in a circus."

Dr. Pipp's scrawny five-feet-four went rigid. His caprine whiskers trembled.

"Throw that clown out!" he choked.

"He isn't clowning, Amos," a fellow scientist soothed. "He doesn't know what—er, what vehicle you're using. Maybe some of the others don't. Perhaps you'd better explain it."

Dr. Pipp calmed down.

"We will be hurled into Time—not into space," he explained. "Our flight cannot be measured in miles but in years. Indeed, we may never leave this spot. We will be projected into the future on an electric beam."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A reporter suppressed a laugh as he pictured Spud Harris trying to keep his balance astride a light ray.

"But first we will be atomized," Dr. Pipp continued.

"You'll wh-a-a-a-t?" Duffy bleated.

"We will be reduced to atoms."

SILENCE fell over the little group. The newspapermen did not know whether to hoot or gasp. They cast sympathetic glances at Spud. He eased a bottle from his pocket and took a quick nip of fortitude.

"How in thunder do you ever expect to come out whole again?" somebody asked.

"The assembler in the atomic receiver will take care of that," Dr. Pipp assured him. "Every atom has a definite affinity for one other atom. In the assembler, under electrical influence, each atom will seek and find its affiant. When each has claimed its own, Mr. Harris and I will be ourselves again."

Through a boozy haze, Spud could see pieces of a scrambled jig-saw puzzle dancing about and claiming partners, finally settling down in the proper pattern.

"What good is it gonna do you, floating around in the future like a couple of dust clouds?" a reporter wanted to know.

"Thirtieth Century scientists will receive us and reassemble us in a device like my own. Probably a much improved one," Dr. Pipp declared. "Later they will reject us to our own Time."

"All I can say is, I hope you jell right when those atoms start choosing partners," the reporter cracked.

A smock-clad man entered a door and squinted myopically through lenses as thick as a tea-room sandwich.

"Ready, George?" the inventor inquired. "Gentlemen, this is Mr. Nobles, my assistant. He will handle the controls. Let us go to the projector room."

The projector room was infinitely more horrible than an electrocution chamber. In the center of the room on low tables were the atomizers, looking like twin coffins of opaque glass and having weird smokestacks. The "smokestacks" were transparent tubes ending in large bulbs near an opening in the roof. Each of the bulbs was encircled by a spiral of wire, giving it something of a bird-cage appearance. On the opposite side of the room was a control panel equipped with a mystifying array of dials, tubes, indicators and switches.

No time was wasted in this gruesome chamber. There was handshaking and attempts at cheerful banalities. Then Dr. Pipp and Spud were out of their clothes and into their coffins.

Nobles turned a dial with each hand, held them until a low humming noise began, then moved them again a fraction of an inch at a time. The humming grew to a higher pitch with each twist of the dials. No one spoke. No one breathed. A wisp of dust appeared in the nearest smokestack. Nobles jerked a switch and the hum became the shrill whine of an idle band-saw. Dust shot up through the tube and swirled around the bird-cage. The bulb took on a dull glow, growing brighter as the agitation within it increased. Momentarily the bulb shone with the brilliance of neon, then a puff of dust shot up through the opening in the roof, hung for a split second like a steam cloud, and vanished.

"There goes Doc!" a photog gasped, aiming his camera too late.

"Spud's tougher for the atomizer to digest," Duffy grunted. "He'll have to be distilled first, I suppose. I bet he'll test ninety-proof."

A few moments later Spud followed

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dr. Pipp into the Unknown.

Nobles immediately made the changes which converted the atomic projector into a receiver, and at once took up his post to await the return of the adventurers—whether it be a matter of hours, days, or months.

CHAPTER II

Glimpse of Hell

A MOMENT after Spud stretched out in his coffin-like atomizer, a numbness crept over him. He became dizzy and lost consciousness, but seemed to awaken almost immediately in a wind tunnel filled with tiny feathers.

Suddenly he was hurled or drawn into what he supposed was the future. There was alternating light and darkness of split-second duration, which he took to be his passage through days and nights. It reminded him of speeding past a white picket fence, or rather of being suspended while the fence flew past him. He did not see the light and darkness, as he possessed no physical senses, yet he was conscious of them. He was aware also of intermittent warm and cool breezes, which he reasoned were Summer and Winter.

Spud wondered suddenly where Dr. Pipp was. He had supposed they would travel together. Had Doc soared on ahead, or had Spud jumped the barrier? Possibly something had gone wrong in the atomizer and Doc hadn't come out at all. Maybe Doc was dead. Or maybe *he* was dead, and now was just a ghost drifting through Eternity. He hoped he was dreaming and tried to pinch himself. There was nothing to pinch.

The flight became monotonous—and fearful. Spud felt that millions of years lay behind. Then he felt a presence.

"That you, Doc?" he wondered.

"Hello, Harris," Doc greeted mentally. "What delayed you?"

"If you think I've been loafing along the way, you've got another think coming, you old goat," Spud thought, adding a telepathic scowl. "I've been sailing along at better than a year a minute, maybe twice that fast; I don't know. And I've been wondering if I'm dead. You reckon we're dead, Doc?"

Dr. Pipp thought not. He was confident everything was going according to his plan.

Spud's fear was not dissipated easily. He was sure they had overshot their mark. He thought of Doc often riding absent-minded past street car stops. But it was not funny now.

"Dang it, Doc," he thought. "You didn't figure on any way to put on brakes, did you? I'm scared we'll be sailing on like this till doomsday."

Doc answered with a mental grunt.

Spud kept his thoughts to himself for a while. No doubt about it, he decided, they were millions of years from the Twentieth Century. They were dead, but Doc just wouldn't admit it.

So far, Spud had not felt hungry. He wondered what ghosts ate, if they did eat.

Then there was a violent tugging at him. He and Doc were separated. As dust is sucked into a vacuum cleaner, Spud was drawn into a dark, swirling hole, a maelstrom in Eternity. He felt warm and thought he detected smoke.

"Oh, my God! No, no!" he tried to cry out. He had never thought much about an everlasting Hell. Vaguely he always had believed a man was punished on Earth for his sins. And he believed he had suffered his share of Earthly Hell.

He wanted to resist this power that was pulling him into the swirling, hot blackness, but he had no hands with

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which to claw out, no heels to dig in. He plunged deeper—then oblivion.

SPUD awakened with the sensation a traveler feels when he awakens on a Pullman sleeper to find the train has stopped somewhere in utter darkness. He was in a cramped position and moved his legs. This startled him. He actually had moved his legs!

He decided to pinch himself. It was a soft, weak pinch, but definitely a pinch on his left arm. Then he tried to move his arms, but they were held tightly folded across his body by a snug wrapping.

"Oh-oh," he thought, remembering what the City Hospital nurse had said. "A strait-jacket. They've finally had to put Spud Harris in a nutty shirt."

His next impulse was to cry out, but he could not open his mouth.

"Did they have to gag me, too?" he wondered. "I must be a pretty violent case."

Claustrophobia seized him. He squirmed and kicked with nightmarish fury. Suddenly he was free, only to find himself held aloft by the heels and being spanked soundly.

He raised his voice to protest against this indignity but uttered only a pathetic little wail. However, the spanking stopped. He opened his eyes and saw blurry shadows but could distinguish nothing. The light hurt his eyes, so he closed them. Someone wrapped him in a blanket and moved him somewhere. Then he was receiving a rubdown.

"My God!" he thought. "Then I am dead—or was. And now I'm reborn—reincarnated. I'm a baby!"

He had never believed in reincarnation, but now it was real. He had heard that spirits of humans sometimes were reborn as beasts and birds. He might have been reborn as an ape. He shuddered. Perhaps Doc was being reincarnated. Visualizing Doc's long face, sad eyes and scanty beard, Spud could not imagine his being reincarnated as anything but a goat. He would suspect every billy-goat he ever saw of being Dr. Pipp.

With a gurgle of thankfulness for his human estate, he lapsed into a long sleep. When he awoke he was hungry and decided a thick steak and French-fried potatoes would go nicely. He tried to shout his wants. Again there was only a wail. It carried more authority this time and brought results. Something soft prodded his face. He ate.

Several days passed in a monotonous routine of sleeping, awakening, eating and sleeping again. No one had cuddled him since his rebirth and Spud began to wonder about his new mother. Surely a mother would fondle her baby. Maybe she . . .

"Poor Mother," he mused sadly. "And poor me. I'm about to enter a new and strange life as an orphan."

HE wondered who he now was, where he was, and how long it had been since he died. Some day he would like to go back and see his grave, and dig up newspaper accounts of his death. Had he and Doc Pipp been eulogized as martyrs to science? He wondered what his widow would think of that.

"Molly couldn't think anything nice about me," he decided bitterly.

Blurry vision had not disturbed Spud greatly. Indeed, blurriness and double-vision had become quite usual with him in his late sodden years. But his sight now began to grow sharper. Phantoms became human beings with faces. Everyone he saw was female. They were stern, efficient-looking women. Their figures were mannish, angular and flat-chested. None of them gave

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him even a fond pat. Undoubtedly he was in an orphanage, he decided.

Up to this time he had neither seen nor heard another baby. Then one day an uncouth howl fractured the peace of his morning nap. Someone had trundled another crib into the room and in it was a bawling baby. Spud wondered if it was Doc.

"Pipe down!" Spud thought. "Let me take a gander at that mug of yours. Are you Doc?" But thought communication now was useless. Maybe it wasn't Doc. Spud decided to try vocally.

"Hiya, Doc," he attempted, but all that came forth was a gurgle. It attracted attention, though, and the other baby stopped crying. A smile flickered across his tear-drenched visage. Spud burst into a torrent of meaningless babble. The other baby silenced him with a familiar petulant grunt.

"It's Doc, all right," Spud decided.

CHAPTER III

Atoms Scattered

SPUD and Doc developed an amazing speed that would put the proverbial weed to shame. In a few weeks they were learning to walk on wobbly legs. They were talking volubly, although their sibilants escaped fuzzily past incipient teeth.

They strove desperately to question the nurses and doctors about their new status but the mannish women brusquely parried their overtures. They performed their duties to their young charges with an air of efficient impersonality and had no time for talk. At times they were even resentful.

"If this ain't reincarnation, what is it?" Spud demanded. "You're dead and don't know it. We're both dead, and we're reborn as somebody else." He moaned disconsolately. "We don't even know who we are—or where."

"I know *who* we are. Our entities haven't changed," Doc snapped. "The question that interests me is *when*. Is this the Thirtieth Century?"

"Nuts!" Spud snorted. "You still think we're Time traveling?"

"Undoubtedly," Doc said firmly.

"Then why do we turn up as a couple of brats? And how come we grow so fast. Who are all these unshapely dames? Why ain't there any men around? What kind of a place is this?"

Doc shook his head sadly.

"We've asked them all that, and learned nothing. We'll have to wait till they're ready to talk."

FOUR bespectacled old scare-crows from a historical society came to visit the hapless youngsters, bringing with them overstuffed brief cases and the musty smell of a library.

The leader of the group peered for a moment at the pair as she might have contemplated a couple of entomological specimens.

"H-m-m-m-m," she commented.

"Whatsa matter?" Spud chirped. "Do we look like freaks?"

She ignored the question.

"Please, Madam, what century is this?" Doc begged.

"The Fourth Century."

"Wh-a-a-a-t?" Doc brayed.

"This is the Fourth Century of our New Creation," she said. "The year, three-eighty-nine. Anno Domini reckoning stopped with the year 2450."

"What is this 'New Creation'?" Spud demanded.

"It is the real—the ultimate—civilization," she declared proudly. "A civilization without the human male."

Spud gulped hard to swallow his amazement.

"Are you batty?" he finally sput-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tered. "How in hell do you. . . ."

"Wait, Harris," Doc interposed. "How can you perpetuate the race without males?"

"Parthenogenetically," she said without a bobble. She gave him a quizzical look. "What century are you from?"

"The Twentieth."

She eyed him unbelievingly and waggled her head.

"There was no atomic projector in the Twentieth Century."

"But there is!" Doc piped. "I'm its inventor, Dr. Amos Pipp."

"The Pipp projector?" she asked herself thoughtfully. She raised her eyes to the ceiling and moved her lips silently, looking like a hen drinking. "Oh, that one—it made only one transmission. It was unsuccessful."

"Unsuccessful?" Spud cried. "We're here ain't we?"

"Yes—unfortunately," she replied with a trace of sympathy.

The significance of her answer struck the Time travelers speechless. Surely their projection had been successful, although their arrival as infants had not been according to Dr. Pipp's plans. Then the fault of his machine must lie in the receiver. What would happen if they tried to return to the Twentieth Century?

Spud tried not to think of it.

"Why did we arrive here as babies?" Doc wanted to know. "My atomic receiver was designed to reassemble its subjects just as they were before projection."

"Our receivers do that when a full complement of atoms is available," another of the savants said. "But your machine did not project a concentrated beam. It spread, scattering you everywhere. Our receivers were able to pick up only a few stray atoms. These were incubated and nourished in the genetics laboratory. And so—well, here you are." She smiled as if that explained everything.

"What you reckon happened to the rest of us?" Spud asked.

She shrugged. "Who knows? Part of you may have been intercepted earlier. Undoubtedly, some of you went on ahead."

It took a long moment for the full import of her statement to sink in. Spud was the first to find tongue.

"Holy mackerel!" he whispered in awe. "You mean we may be living somewhere else at the same time? That I may be living in a century or two behind and in a century or two farther on? Three of me at once?"

"It is possible."

"I don't see how. . . ." Spud began, then stopped. It made him dizzy to think of it. What if he and Doc succeeded in going back to the Twentieth Century, only to find their twins had beat them back to claim their fame and fortune as Time travelers? And which ones would really be the rightful claimants? Worse still, they might be preceded by more than one each of themselves. Their return might complete two sets of triplets, or quadruplets. Still others might come straggling back in later years.

"Jehosophat!" Spud gasped. "I might become a whole family of brothers—enough for a baseball team."

CHAPTER IV

Extermination of Males

THE two Time travelers had reversed the interview completely, giving their visitors little opportunity to question them. They learned that they were in a Government hospital which was chiefly a nursery for raising babies of the parthenogenetic New Creation.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Such hospitals were located in various areas for the artificial conception and, later, the birth of the nation's young. Population was controlled in this way. New people were produced only as they were needed.

After birth, the babies were kept in the nursery through infancy. Then they were transferred to nursery-schools and still later to advanced schools. Graduation from school gave them full rights as citizens of New Creation.

"I haven't seen any other kids," Spud declared.

"The Government ordered you segregated," she explained.

"Oh. Like lepers, huh?" Spud grimaced. "Look, lady, do New Creation babies grow as fast as we do? What makes us grow so fast?"

"All babies develop rapidly in this age," she said. "Why let them waste all those years in natural growth? Time is too valuable. We do not sit idly by and wait for lazy Nature to develop them. We speed up their biochemical processes, make their development in months equal the growth of your ancient babies in years." *

But Doc was more interested now in this fatherless creation. He asked the spokeswoman to explain it.

"We came to question you, not to be questioned," she said. "But I will tell you briefly. Parthenogenesis always has existed in certain forms of plant lice and in lower marine life. The first mammalian creature conceived without a father was a rabbit, produced in an experiment in the Twentieth Century, the year 1939. I remember the history because of its importance to us.

"Your ancient scientist impregnated a natural doe rabbit with a simple saline solution. In due time she bore a baby doe. Later-day scientists experimented successfully with the highest form of mammals—humans. The discovery was put to no purpose until nearly four-hundred years ago when the world was almost depopulated by continuous and ruthless warfare. There were not enough men left to perpetuate the race. Then we had to take matters into our own hands."

"And there hasn't been a man on Earth for four-hundred years?" Doc gasped.

"Almost. Three-hundred and eighty-nine years ago we had to take over and correct the miserable botch you men had made of civilization. The few remaining males were sterilized. So a man-less civilization was born. We date our calendars from that year."

"Just one more question, please," Doc begged. "Where are we now? How far from Atlanta, Georgia, U. S. A.?"

"This is City 4-A, Southeast Zone," she said. "Atlanta once stood here."

THE historians questioned Doc and Spud at great length about the Twentieth Century. They were interested especially in women of that time: Madame Curie, Susan B. Anthony, Senator Hattie Caraway, Ruth Bryan Owen and other important figures.

Spud was of little help, although he could offer some interesting bits about Eleanor Holm, Dorothy Bundy, Sally Rand, Ann Sheridan and a few others about whom his questioners had never heard.

"You have received other visitors from past centuries?" Doc asked as a parting shot.

"Yes, from as far back as the Twenty-second."

"Then why didn't they warn their peoples about those devastating wars?"

*Early in the Twentieth Century, thyroxin, an iodine-containing compound of the thyroid gland, was used successfully to accelerate growth.—Ed.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Doc cried. "Why couldn't . . ."

"Men were fools!" she snorted. "Millions of war-mad men bringing extinction upon themselves. Who could stop them?"

"I'll stop them!" Doc shouted with a solemnness unbelievable upon a childish face. "I'll make them listen. I'll . . ."

The spokesman shook her head. That same faint trace of sympathy shone in her face.

"You will not return to your Time. Our histories record no return prior to 2180 A. D."

Her words fell with stunning effect. What dangers lurked out there in Time? Would it be better to remain in this weird century—a couple of freaks in a man-less age? Both Spud and Doc knew they could not stay. They must attempt a return to their own Time, regardless of what fate awaited them.

CHAPTER V

Kiss That Spells Death

THE preternatural growth of the two unhappy Time explorers continued unchecked and each increase in stature brought new woes to them. Hospital attaches, once merely indifferent, now were becoming resentful.

Spud and Doc were transferred to another wing of the huge Government building and quartered in a glassed-in room where visitors were allowed to come and gape at them.

"You'd think they never saw a brat before," Spud complained. "Now I know how the Dionnes feel."

The change in quarters brought a change in doctors and nurses. The doctor in charge was an overbearing old battle-ax with an undershot jaw and a perpetual scowl. Her subordinates called her Mag. One of her legs was shorter than the other and she walked with a dippy gait that suggested a cyclist riding a wheel with an off-center hub. She carried a dangerous-looking walking stick.

Old Mag was openly hostile to her new charges and seemed to take fiendish delight in prodding and thumping them mercilessly.

"Swine!" she would hiss. "Filthy swine. I'd enjoy butchering you alive!" Her murderous scowls were corroborative.

"I've never socked a dame yet," Spud muttered when she was out of earshot, "but one of these days I'm gonna bop that old hussy in the kisser." He knotted a hard little fist.

"I don't like it," Doc sighed. "The old shrew hates us for invading her man-less civilization. She's got murder in her heart and she'll stop at nothing. The sooner we can get away from here the better."

Mag's abuses were off-set somewhat by the kindness of one of the new nurses. This girl was small, pretty, shapely and softly feminine—an oddity among her sisters. She had large hazel eyes with long, curling lashes and wavy chestnut hair that cascaded down over her shoulders. All of her sisters wore their hair cropped short. Her name, Rosamond, also was unlike those of her sisters, who chose short, unfrilly names such as Ann, Nan, Em or Sue. Legally, they had no names, but were numbered serially. They adopted names merely to economize on words.

Rosamond took an especial fancy for Spud. She would sit close to him for hours, as if to protect him from the bellicose Mag. She told him much about Fourth Century civilization and would listen breathlessly to stories about his Time. Often she would try to fondle him as a little girl does an

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unwieldy teddy bear, cooing and laughing happily. Spud resented this type of coddling but suffered it because she enjoyed it.

"Just wait till I get a little bigger," he mused. "I'll show her a trick or two about petting."

DURING the following weeks, life became almost unbearable in the glassed-in "cage." Old Mag had forbidden Rosamond to visit the growing Time explorers except on necessary errands. Other nurses who came into the room were curt and unsympathetic. Visitors who came to peer curiously at them through the sound-proof walls irritated them

Spud rubbed at pubescent down on his cheeks and wished for a razor. But a razor was as obsolete in this man-less civilization as was a flint and tinderbox in his own Time. Nothing masculine now survived. Even the language had been purged of masculine terms. There was no attire in New Creation befitting a male. Spud and Doc had to wear the floppy culottes and loose pull-over blouses that most of the "sisters" wore.

"Dang it, Doc, we got to get out of here," Spud moaned. "If we don't hurry back home, a couple of our twins may beat us there and cop all the gravy from the news syndicates and all."

"And the fame," Doc added.

"I'll beat the ears offa any upstart twin of mine who tries to crash my racket," Spud growled.

Doc was silent.

"You know, it's funny," Spud said thoughtfully. "Suppose another one of me should beat me back. Which of us would be the real Spud Harris? He might be just as much me as I am."

"Maybe fingerprints would decide," Doc suggested.

"I never was mugged and printed," Spud said ruefully. "They never got me for anything worse than 'D and D'."

"I had hoped I could stay here a while for some scientific research," Doc said. "But this place and these women are getting on my nerves. It's worse than a prison."

"Mag acts like we were a couple of 'fifth columnists' or something," Spud mumbled gloomily. "The old bat."

"We *are* potential saboteurs," Doc admitted. "Saboteurs of their New Creation."

"You mean . . .?"

"What else could I mean, you fool?" Doc snapped.

"Who'd go for these frosty dames?" Spud hooted. "As far as I'm concerned, they can all go jump in a lake. All except . . ."

"Except Rosamond," Doc finished for him.

"She is kinda nifty, ain't she?" Spud said slyly. "But, hell, I ain't started anything with her."

"Not wittingly, perhaps," Doc said. "But her speculative glances at you couldn't go unnoticed. As icy-veined as she is, old Mag can interpret those glances. And she doesn't like the interpretation."

THE sliding door to their room opened silently and Rosamond tripped in, singing a cheery greeting. She brandished her hypodermic needle, preparatory to giving her charges their daily injection of growth accelerator. Doc was dosed quickly and efficiently, but Rosamond dawdled fondly over her administration to Spud.

"Look, Toots," Spud whispered. "Maybe you'd better stop dosing me with that growing juice. I'm big as you are now. Pretty soon I might up and fling a flock of woo at you."

"You what?" She did not understand his slang but read a tender message in his eyes. She snuggled close.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"This!" he muttered, gathering her in a fierce embrace and planting a long Twentieth Century kiss on her full, red virgin lips. Rosamond struggled briefly, then her arms stole around his neck and she clung breathlessly in a lingering and instinctive return of her first kiss.

When he released her, Rosamond gasped and reddened in pretty confusion. She turned toward the door to confront the sour-visaged Mag who had witnessed the entire scene.

Spud attempted banality.

"Don't shoot, I'll marry your daughter," he managed with a weak grin.

Mag unleased a storm of incoherent invective that fouled the air, banging her heavy stick against the floor for emphasis. Rosamond crept timidly back to Spud and stood in front of him as if to protect him from her fuming superior. Spud put his arm around her and patted her shoulder.

Mag bounced into the room, tore the girl from Spud's embrace and flung her toward the door.

"Get out!" Mag bellowed. "And never come to this ward again. I'll have you transferred."

She whirled upon Spud in a choking rage.

"For that," she finally seethed, "you die!"

She stormed out of the room. The door closed silently.

CHAPTER VI

Nature's Grim Prank

"THIS war of nerves is getting my nanny," Spud complained a month later. "That gas getting mixed up in the ventilator tube to our room a couple weeks ago don't look like any accident to me. I been jittery ever since."

"Accident or not," Doc said, "if I hadn't been lying awake trying to think of a way to escape, we'd both be dead."

"Your insomnia sure came in handy," Spud declared. "And I'm getting it now. I'm afraid to go to sleep. Why don't the old bat start something, instead of pulling something sneaky like that? I'd shove her teeth down her throat."

"Sh-h-h-h-h-h!"

Both whirled toward the door which was closing behind Rosamond. She stood smiling mischievously, a finger on her lips.

"Rosie!" Spud whispered. "What you doing here? Old Pain-in-the-Face told you to stay outa here."

"I'm a mouse," she giggled softly.

"What the hell you talking about?"

"The cat's away, and I'm playing," she explained. "Mag is away from the hospital today, so I sneaked down to see you. Let's take a walk."

"You mean walk right outa this dump? Somebody'd stop us."

"No one ever disobeys Mag, so everyone would think I had permission to take you out," Rosamond said. "No one will stop us."

"I'm gonna risk it, Doc," Spud decided. "Let's go, Baby."

Rosamond clutched Spud's arm with an air of possessive pride as she marched him past her sisters. She looked up into his eyes happily.

Spud halted at the door of the hospital. The building was situated on a high hill, affording an excellent view of a large part of the city. Spud was surprised, because it was much smaller than the ancient Atlanta he had known.

"It's just a little burg," he grunted.

Rosamond explained that there had been no large cities since the beginning of New Creation. Speedy transportation facilities removed necessity for living in cramped areas. People lived

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

along the wide, smooth highways that criss-crossed the country like avenues in a city.

Spud wanted to go to the shopping district and inspect some of the stores; maybe attend a theater. Rosamond thought it might be unsafe. Mag was downtown on business. She might see them. Rosamond suggested a nearby park.

THE day was hot and, after a short stroll, Spud sprawled on the cool grass to watch several large girls playing a listless game of croquet.

"This the most thrilling sport you got?" he asked. "Tapping a wooden ball around with a mallet? No baseball, no football, no prizefights?"

Rosamond shook her head at the unfamiliar terms.

"This is a hell of an age," he grunted. "Back in my Time you could go to an arena and see a couple of bruisers belt the daylights out of each other; or eleven men tear into eleven other men in a bone-breaking melee. Even wrestling's more exciting than this?"

"You do not like our games?" Rosamond asked, a little hurt.

Spud snorted.

"You call croquet and jackstones and tiddlywinks sports? Look, Babe, eleven real men line up against eleven brawny opponents. Big fellas. The ball is snapped. They pile into each other in a tangle of arms and legs and helmets. Human spaghetti."

He grew tense, illustrated his word picture with gestures.

"Out pops a swivel-hipped giant with the ball clutched against his side. An opponent dives at him. He sidesteps and races toward the sideline while his interference forms. He cuts back toward midfield, then heads for the goal. Opponents hurl themselves at him, only to be mowed down by his interference. He streaks hell-bent-for-election to the goal while fifty thousand wild spectators yell their lungs out."

He paused for breath.

"That's a real game!"

Rosamond was rapt, eyes shining, fingernails digging into her palms.

"I reckon your shows are about as exciting as your games," Spud continued. "Nothing to 'em. How could there be? You can't have plays without plots and you can't have plots without love. You don't know the meaning of love; it ain't even in your language. Back in my Time we have real plays. Men fight and kill each other over women, and women kill each other over men. And . . ."

"And have babies?" she cut in.

"Ulp," Spud choked. "What?"

"Women have babies of their own?" she asked wistfully. "I want one, Spud. Some day I will have one, but they will take her away from me, as they take my sisters' babies. They will keep her in the hospital and raise her. I will never see her. My sisters do not care, but I want a baby of my own. My baby to keep, and dress, and bathe, and hold close—like this. I want her to be a male baby, like you, Spud."

Spud felt a surge of sympathy for this pretty, anachronistic angel. She did not belong to this man-less age. She was alive and vibrant, filled with an atavistic desire unknown to her sisters of New Creation to which she belonged, to have her man and her babies? Why must this utterly lovable and love-hungry creature be a freak because of her normality? Why couldn't . . .

ROSAMOND broke into his musing. "You're not a baby now, Spud. You're almost grown. Soon you will be a big man."

"Yeah. And soon I'll be hellin'-it back to where I belong."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You want to go back soon?" There was distress in her tone.

"You're darn tootin'. It ain't getting too healthy for me here; or Doc, either. I've learned enough about your New Creation to make a fortune on magazine and syndicate articles. And I'm gonna ghost a scientific book for Doc.

"Yep, I'll be rich. I won't drink anything but champagne. I'll get so full of it I can squirt it through my teeth at Luke Gordon on the Times sports desk. Hell, I'll buy the paper and fire him. And I'll even. . ."

"You will take me with you, my Spud?" Rosamond begged.

"Huh? Er, yeah, maybe." A glowering picture of Molly flashed into his mind. He winced. "But you see . . ."

"And fight for me as other ancients fought for their women?" She edged closer to him and laid her head on his shoulder, oblivious of others in the park. Her soft, warm body snuggled close to his.

"Judas Priest!" Spud yelped, leaping to his feet. "The old . . ."

Mag was bearing down upon them in a limpy lope across the grass, brandishing her cane and muttering murderous imprecations. Spud checked an impulse to flee as Rosamond sprang protectively in front of him. He shouldered her aside and faced the fuming Mag.

"Come on, you old bat!" he challenged.

Mag's cane swished through the air and caught him a glancing blow on the head. Spud went down but not out. He felt blood trickle down his scalp. Mag reversed her cane and brought it down again as Spud staggered to his knees. The blow almost paralyzed his upraised arm and flattened him again. Rosamond leaped to his defense but a backward swipe of Mag's free hand sent her sprawling. With a supreme effort, Spud hunched his shoulders and hurled himself at his attacker in what Twentieth Century wrestlers knew as a flying tackle. His head thumped into Mag's midriff. She went down and out with a wheezy grunt.

"I've sure played hell," Spud panted as he and Rosamond hurried back to the hospital. "She'll really be out for blood now."

CHAPTER VII

Death Watch

LIKE a faithful dog waiting beside the grave of a departed master, George Nobles sat hunched before the weird atomic projector-receiver in Dr. Amos Pipp's laboratory, nursing a waning hope for the return of his employer and Spud Harris from the Unknown into which he had sent them.

Nobles had aged ten years, although it had been slightly more than a year since the Time explorers had departed on their dangerous journey. He had aged because it was his hand that shot home the switch to send millions of volts through their bodies, atomizing them; his hand that turned the dials to tune the powerful electric beam on which their atomized bodies rode into—what?

Not for an hour—hardly a minute—had he deserted the atomic receiver. His daughter brought meals to him there and he made coffee on a hot plate. He slept there on a cot, beside which was rigged an alarm attached to the ever-tuned receiver.

Nobles arose stiffly from his chair and answered a knock at the laboratory door.

"Guess what I brought tonight, Daddy," his daughter greeted him. Then without waiting for his answer, "I got chicken salad and sliced toma-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

toes and a vacuum bottle of iced tea. It's so hot I thought you'd like something like that."

"You're my angel, Patty," he declared, taking the bottle and rumpling her yellow curls. His voice was tired and his smile strained. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

Patty opened the lunchbox and made a fuss of setting things on the little table. She chatted cheerfully while he ate, waiting patiently until he had finished before reopening their usual argument.

"Daddy," she finally began. "Don't you realize it's useless to wait for them any longer? It's been more than a year now. They aren't coming back; never could have come back. People are beginning to say you're—well, crazy."

Nobles heaved a long-suffering sigh. "I don't care what they say, I just can't abandon my post—not yet. I don't believe they're dead, as people claim. There wasn't a trace of them left in the atomizers, was there? Not a trace.

"No, Patty girl, they're somewhere out there in Time. I don't know what's delayed them so long but, if I deserted my post now, I'd always feel like—like a murderer."

"But, Daddy," Patty pleaded. "You aren't drawing any salary and we're going deeper into your savings every week. Soon we won't have any money left—then what?"

Nobles shook his head sorrowfully. "When they come back, Honey, we'll all be rich." He said it without conviction.

Silently Patty put the dirty dishes back into the box and poured the last of the tea.

"Listen, Daddy," she said at last. "I'm trying to find a job."

"But you're going back to school in September."

"I *do* want to finish, but we can't use up *all* of your savings. I won't go back until there's some money coming in." She fought to keep back tears, then smiled weakly. "But it's all right. I'd like to work. I'll get a better education that way."

She gave him a quick kiss and hurried away.

Nobles aged another year or two. He returned to his monotonous waiting, thinking unhappily of his daughter's desire to finish school and of his dwindling bank account. He reached into a drawer and took out a letter he had read a dozen times since receiving it that morning. It was a terse note from the power company to Pipp's Laboratory, and read:

". . . . and, unless your account is settled immediately, we shall be forced to discontinue service."

CHAPTER VIII

Doomed!

SPUD and Doc anxiously faced a grim-visaged Government judge to receive sentence as aliens dangerous to the New Creation. Spud had brought on the indictment by awakening amorous emotion within the lovely Rosamond, but he and Doc were tried jointly and found guilty as charged.

Until recently, Mag had stood alone in her bitter hostility toward the Twentieth Century males; other sisters of New Creation had showed only mild resentment. But Spud's belly-caving counter attack against Mag in the park evoked widespread sympathy for her and brought wholesale wrath upon himself and Doc.

"Maybe she'll deport us," Spud whispered hopefully.

The judge glowered at them. Mag leered triumphantly.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It shall please this court to mete out the kind of punishment the Twentieth Century intruders know," the judge intoned in a crackling voice. "I sentence you both to be deported—after two years of hard labor."

Her words crashed against the prisoners' ears like the knell of doom. Already more than a year had passed since they had been hurled from their own Time. Would Nobles stand by for them another two years? Hardly. If they were sent backward on an electric beam two years hence, there would be no one to receive them. They would drift on and on forever, neither dead nor alive—just atomized human jetsam on the boundless sea of Time.

The judge was speaking again: "We have no barbarous prisons or labor camps in our civilization but Sister Mag has graciously agreed to supervise your punishment. You will be in her custody for the duration of your penal servitude."

Mag fairly beamed malevolence.

The prisoners were returned at once to the Government hospital to begin paying their debt to New Creation.

"DAMN!" Spud gasped, using a forefinger as a squeegee on his forehead. "It's hotter'n the Black Hole of Calcutta in here."

"The old vixen cut off the ventilators," Doc groaned. "Hold that dustpan still, will you?"

Their initial task was giving them an insight into the ingenious mind of a spiteful old shrew. What at first appeared to be a simple chore had become back-breaking toil. With Doc wielding an antiquated broom and Spud handling a dustpan and an oiled rag, they were sweeping and polishing a narrow walled-in stairway that seemed to have been accumulating rubbish for ages. But they were required to work from the bottom upward. Almost every movement Doc made from above brought down a small cascade of trash and dust to nullify their efforts.

Escape was impossible, as the thoughtful Mag had disconnected the photo-electric cells operating the doors from within the hermetic staircase. As extra precaution, she had stationed guards outside the transparent plastic doors both above and below her victims.

The guards lounged in comfortable chairs, sipping tall and tantalizing drinks, unmindful of the prisoners.

Spud staggered down the steps and pounded on the door.

"Open up, Sis'," he begged. "We're roasting alive in here."

She kept her eyes glued on the book she was reading.

"Well, turn on the air," he pleaded.

She took a deep swig at her frosty glass.

Bathed in sweat and gasping at the dust-laden, scorching air, Spud and Doc worked feverishly to finish their Hellish task. Completion of the job was their only salvation. With deftness that sometimes characterizes madmen, they made slow but steady progress. At last they were only a few steps from the top landing. The guard outside rose lazily from her chair and the door opened. A gust of clean, cool air rushed in.

"When you are through," the guard said tonelessly. "Mag has a new task." She stepped back and the door closed silently.

"God, that air feels good," Spud exclaimed. Then his countenance fell. "Hey, whoa. What the . . ."

The gust of welcome air eddied down the steps, undoing all the work Spud and Doc had done.

Spud gulped in dismay.

"We gotta do all that over again?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"She's a devil," Doc croaked. "That fresh air to tantalize us and undo our work was part of her fiendish scheme."

Like the futile Sisyphus rolling his elusive stone in Hades, Doc and Spud disconsolately began their task anew. Soon their breath of fresh air was forgotten. The place grew hotter and their spirits lower. Sweat streamed down their faces, stinging their eyes. Dust caked in their nostrils and parched their throats. Doc leaned on his broom and fought for breath.

'Dammit, I can't go on," Spud panted. "My back's broke and my tongue's hanging out a yard."

He gazed hopelessly at the guard at the lower landing. She lifted her glass for a deep draught.

Spud sputtered incoherently, gripped his dustpan and stumbled down the steps. He banged his dustpan on the door.

"Let us out!" he bawled. "We're suffocating."

The guard made a slight shrug without looking at him. He continued whaling away with his dustpan.

CHAPTER VIII

A Long Chance

ROSAMOND stepped from a room several doors down the hall. Her eyes were red-rimmed. She had learned of the sentence upon her Twentieth Century friends and had sneaked into the room for an old-fashioned, womanly cry.

Spud's clanging dustpan attracted her attention. She turned, saw misery on his begrimed countenance and rushed toward him with a sympathetic little sob. The guard intercepted her before she came within range of the door's electric eye.

Rosamond, not fully comprehending the situation but seeing that Spud needed help, flung herself at the guard with the fury of a tigress. The startled woman staggered backward, screaming as Rosamond's nails raked across her face. She fastened both hands in Rosamond's long hair. Slowly the girl's head was bent backward until Spud, watching helplessly, was sure her neck must snap.

In her writhing Rosamond inadvertantly rammed her foot into her opponent's shin. The guard jumped backward. Rosamond turned the accident into a mode of attack. Again she dug her little shoe into the guard's shins—and again. The guard clung desperately to Rosamond's hair but retreated steadily until she broke the door's photo-electric beam.

The door slid open and Spud staggered out, Doc close at his heels. They stood for a moment sucking cool, pure air into their lungs, gulping, like a couple of goldfish. Spud pounced on the guard and dug his fingers into her shoulders until she released Rosamond's hair. He flung the woman into her chair and clenched a menacing fist under her nose.

"Where's the rejector room?" Spud croaked. "Lead us there, Rosie. Quick!"

Until that moment his thoughts had been merely of escaping from the sizzling torture chamber. Now they might as well go all the way if they could make it.

They sprinted down the hall before the cowed guard could recover. Rosamond, in the lead, pointed to an intersecting corridor.

Three sisters, attracted by the screams, burst through a door at the far end of the hall and came on the run.

"Around the corner and run for it," Spud ordered. "I'll bring up the rear

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and stand 'em off."

They swung around the corner, only to confront four other husky sisters braced to meet them at the far end of the hall.

"Oh-oh," Spud grunted, dashing into the lead. "Follow right on my heels. Run with your heads low, and run hard!"

He crouched and picked up speed for a line plunge. "Give 'em Hell, Georgia!" he whooped.

The women toppled like tenpins as Spud plowed into them. The trio dashed for the door, which opened just in time.

"Now where?" Spud demanded.

Rosamond pointed to a stairway. The sight of it made Spud falter. A gong clanged somewhere behind them and throughout the hospital other gongs joined in a chorus.

DOWN the steps they plunged and into a short hallway that led to the rejector room. But again their escape was cut off. A group of grim sisters awaited them. They were unarmed but Spud had seen what they could do with their fingernails.

"Wow! There must be twenty of 'em," Spud muttered as the trio pulled up. He looked anxiously over his shoulder, considering retreat. A swarm of pursuing sisters clattered down the stairs behind them.

"Doc, I still haven't socked a broad," Spud gritted. "But I think my knuckles are gonna get a taste of it now. You'd better try a little of it, too. Grab my belt, Baby. You grab hers, Doc. Now follow me. Crouch low just as we get there. Let's go!"

With eight pursuers on their heels, the trio raced toward the waiting sisters. The sisters advanced to meet them. Spud and his allies ducked low and plunged.

There was a chorus of screams and moans as sisters crashed into sisters. The now incessant clanging of gongs added to the din. Butting and elbowing, Spud made progress through the melee. His left eye came in contact with a knee. He felt it closing. Short, painful grunts behind him told him that Doc also was using his elbows.

Spud emerged from the tangle and his good eye sought the door. A sister rushed for him and missed but grabbed a handful of Rosamond's hair. Spud put her to sleep with a neat clip to the button. He hustled Doc and Rosamond ahead of him toward the rejector room door.

The door slid open and Rosamond held it. Three sisters broke from the crowd and charged at Spud. He wound up and let fly a haymaker at the leader. It caught her on the chin and spun her head around. She crumpled and the other two stumbled over her. Spud wheeled and rushed through the door. It closed and Rosamond pressed a catch that locked it.

"Warm up that atom squirter, Sis'," Spud growled at the operator. "We got two tickets to Georgia—and 1940!"

The technician shook her head defiantly, looking hopefully toward the door at which a horde of sisters were pounding.

Doc was peering at the control panel of the rejector. He was puzzled by the absence of dials and switches which had cluttered up the panel of his original projector. Suddenly his face lighted.

"It must be automatic," he shouted, making a nervous, closer examination. "It is! All you have to do is set it for the Time to be traversed, then throw the switch."

"So we won't need this dame?" Spud yipped joyfully.

"No, Rosamond can do it. I can show her how."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"All right, Toots," Spud shot at the technician. "Just so's you won't gum up our take-off, I'll make you Number 3." He knotted his fist. "No-o-o, I won't have to." He snatched off his belt and bound her wrists. Doc followed suit and tied her ankles.

DOC set the control for rejection to 1940 and hurriedly showed Rosamond how to throw the switch when they were ready.

Spud gripped Rosamond by the shoulders.

"Sugarlumps, I don't know how to thank you," he declared with a gulpy catch in his throat. "You sure saved our hides."

She swayed toward him and his arms enveloped her. He printed a briny, dusty kiss on her eager lips.

A metallic clank jerked their attention to the door. Old Mag was wielding a heavy hammer. The door chipped but did not shatter.

"Gotta make it snappy," Spud blurted, wriggling free. She released him reluctantly.

"I will follow you, my Spud," she declared tearfully. "You will wait to receive me?"

Spud fought away an imperious vision of Molly.

"You bet I will, Baby!" he promised sincerely. Then to himself he vowed: "I don't know how in heck I'll manage it—but I will!"

Mag continued her hammering with unabated vigor. A crack appeared near the top of the door.

Impatiently Doc shoved Rosamond toward the control panel.

"Au revoir, Sweet. Turn your back," Spud cried, peeling off his blouse and kicking off his shoes. "This may not be as artistic as Gypsy Rose did it, but here goes." He stepped out of his culottes, his only other garment, faced the door for a split second with thumb to nose in impudent salute to old Mag, then ducked into his atomizer. Doc was following suit.

"See you somewhere out there," Spud grunted grimly to Doc and lowered the lid of his atomizer. In their frantic escape from the roasting stairway, he had given no thought to the return-trip peril of which the old historian had hinted. But there was no turning back now. Numbness crept over him.

CHAPTER IX

All for Naught

DR. PIPP'S laboratory was a madhouse. Weird squeaks and crackles in the atomic receiver had yanked George Nobles from the depths of despair and sent him flying to the telephone to notify City Hospital he was attuned to a beam from another century; undoubtedly a beam heralding the return of the long-absent Time explorers. A squad of doctors and two ambulances were on hand; so were the ubiquitous reporters and photogs. Cops swarmed the place.

Sam Morgan, enterprising press agent for Sally Smiley, recently elected "Miss Peachtree" in a city-wide beauty contest, was on hand with his honey-blonde protegee.

Nobles crouched in front of his control board, fidgeting with the dials. The hisses and crackles became a low, steady hum. A tiny vapor cloud appeared above the opening in the roof, growing as it hovered. The spectators stared breathlessly.

The cloud wavered uncertainly. It seemed to grow a wispy arm, like the tentacle of an octopus. The arm groped exploringly into the bird-cage bulb of one of the receivers. Nobles nursed a rheostat, coaxing more power into the receiver.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Apparently satisfied with its findings, the cloud streamlined itself and swooped into the bulb. Nobles closed a switch, yanked open another, emitted a tremulous sigh of fleeting relief, then glanced anxiously toward the hole in the roof. No other cloud had yet appeared.

The humming in the receiver had ceased. Awed silence filled the room. Nobles reached for a dial, changed his mind and waited nervously.

There was a faint thumping inside the assembler. Nobles hopped to it and raised the lid. Spud sat up and blinked foggily. Someone snatched a sheet from a stretcher and threw it around him. Nobles saw another vapor cloud and leaped back to the controls.

Spud climbed stiffly out of his coffin and stood beside it like a pallid Ghandi. He seemed a bit haggard from his trip but appeared a much younger and healthier Spud Harris. A doctor advanced with a stethescope. Spud pushed him aside scornfully.

Sally Smiley tittered. Morgan shoved her through the crowd.

"Greet him, Sal," he ordered. "Go into a clinch. This'll make P-Eye everywhere. You photogs get a load of this."

Sally confronted Spud for the clinch. He approved and cooperated.

The second vapor cloud had formed and reached for the bulb.

There was a commotion at the door as a flushed and panting Molly Harris tried to crash through two policemen. A belated newsreel cameraman shouldered his way inside and Molly followed.

She saw Spud as he was coming up for air the second time.

"Spurgeon!" Molly yowled. She snatched the cameraman's tripod and heaved it at her philandering spouse. The heavy end of the tripod caught him squarely on the noggin and bounced against the "smokestack" of his assembler. The stack broke off at the base and crashed into the other assembler. Glass shattered.

A thin cloud hung together for a moment near the ceiling. It dispersed into wispy fragments that wafted about the room, then disappeared.

"My God!" a photog gulped. "It sprayed Doc all over the place."

SPUD awoke in a tidy room in City Hospital. He pressed a hand to his throbbing head.

"Ow!" he groaned. "Musta took on a few too many."

His eyes fluttered open and he saw several important-looking doctors hovering solicitously over him. "Go 'way," he ordered weakly. "Lemme 'lone."

He caught sight of the familiar face of a pretty nurse.

"Hiya, Toots," he grinned feebly. "I'm back again."

"Oh, Mister Harris," she gushed, showing a new respect. "You're famous! The place is fairly teeming with publishers and reporters and photographers and scientists, all waiting to interview you."

"About what?" he demanded. What the hell was she talking about?

"That blow. His memory's gone," a doctor whispered.

"About your trip," the nurse explained.

"What trip?"

"To the Thirtieth Century. Dr. Pipp died on the return voyage and you're the only one left to tell about it."

Spud stared at her in blank astonishment. Then a twinkle lit his eyes. He winked and gave her an intimate pinch.

"Cute little kidder," he sighed. "Look Babe, I gotta snap outa this. Go sneak me a little snort of something, will you? Then call up the Times and ask for the sports desk. Tell Luke Gordon I'll be in Monday, sure . . . Er, what day is this?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was an unequalled expression of contentment on Sidney's face

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SIDNEY, the Screwloose Robot

by
WILLIAM P. McGIVERN

Sidney, the robot, was perfect in every detail, except for one thing — he had a screw loose! Which made a difference . . .

STRETCHED out on the workbench he—I almost said "it"—looked just like one of those illustrations you see in science fiction magazines. You know the kind . . . robots with jointed arms and legs, cylindrical steel bodies and bucket-like heads; generally caught by the artists in the act of crushing their creators.

But Sidney—why we called him that I don't know—was not a picture. He was the real McCoy. A living, thinking robot. Our tests had just proved that beyond any doubt.

I gazed down at him paternally. I don't suppose he was actually any more handsome than a polished-up garbage can, but to me he was the most beautiful sight in the world. Family pride, I guess.

I heard my partner, Dave Wright, draw a deep trembly breath behind me. I looked at him and smiled at the somehow, ludicrous expression that was stamped on his fat pear-shaped face.

"Well," I said, "it's all over but the shouting. Sidney hits an all six so I guess that makes fathers out of us—or something."

"Yeah," Dave continued to gaze solemnly at Sidney. "Do you think we ought to pass out cigars—or something?"

I laughed and slapped him on the back. In spite of our clowning this was probably the biggest moment of our respective lives. For four years Dave and I had slaved to prove that the creation of rational robot life was more than just a wild dream.

And now we had before us the tangible evidence that our years of toil and sacrifice had not been wasted. Important also was the fact that our success had arrived just in time to save our financial as well as our scientific standing. Bills had been piling up for months and our only hope had been to get Sidney ready in time to exhibit at the science convention. If the judges considered Sidney a useful, productive addition to society—and we knew they would—we would be eligible for a fellowship that would enable us to continue our experimental research free from the spectre of impatient creditors and nagging collectors.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Come on," I said jubilantly, "let's have a drink. Every father is entitled to that much after pacing the floor all night. We'll connect Sidney up again when we come back. We've got to get an early start on his education, y'know."

"About his education," Dave said later, as I poured him two fingers—up and down—of Scotch, "just how much will we have to teach him?"

I scratched my head.

"That's kind of hard to say. We know of course that he has an adult brain. We'll have to explain a lot of things to him, but I'm not anticipating any trouble on that score. Our big job is to make him appreciate his responsibility and obligation to mankind. We've got to teach him to work.

"And we've got to prove to the judges at the convention that he can and will work or we won't have a chance at that fellowship."

"It sounds like a big order," Dave said dubiously.

I drained my glass.

"It is," I said. "So let's get back and hook him up. The sooner he gets to work the better."

IN the lab, Dave made the necessary adjustments under Sidney's metal scalp and then slid it back into place. In a few seconds we heard the faint humming noise that emanated from the brain coils and then Sidney opened his eyes and sat up.

We had introduced ourselves in the first experiment, so there was a gleam of recognition in his eye as he regarded us.

"Well here we are again," I said rather inanely. "How do you feel?"

"Oh fine," Sidney answered vaguely. "How do you feel?"

Dave nudged me.

"Hear that? Smart as a whip."

Sidney apparently heard this, for his metal mouth slit parted in a wide smile. He stared with new friendliness at Dave.

"Now Sidney," I said hurriedly. "We have several important things to tell you. First of all you are a robot. You must always remember that. You must be industrious, you must be efficient, you must be useful. These are the three laws that are to govern your behavior. In short you must make up your mind to work."

"What was that last word?" Sidney asked, and I thought I detected a note of apprehension in his voice. "It's got a kind of a nasty ring to it. What is it?"

"Work," I repeated. "Work."

"It doesn't sound very pleasant," Sidney said, and then I was sure there was apprehension in his voice. "Tell me about it."

"Well," I said, "the best illustration I can give you—"

I stopped. Sidney was stretching himself out on the table.

He looked up in embarrassment as my voice trailed off. "I'm sorry," he said apologetically. "I just feel a little better when I lay flat. You don't mind do you?"

"Maybe he's just like a growing boy," Dave said rather weakly. "You know," his voice faltered as he looked at me, "tired all the time."

"Sure," I said. I looked back at Sidney. He had thrown one metal arm across his eyes. "Light bothering you?" I asked and I'm afraid there was a distinctly cold edge to my voice.

"It's all right," Sidney's voice sounded muffled. "I can stand it. Tell me some more about this work business."

Dave smiled at me triumphantly.

"See," he whispered. "You've got him interested."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well," I started again, "by work we mean, well, for instance, just what we're doing now."

Sidney removed his arm from his eyes.

"Oh," he said relievedly, "is that all? You had me worried for a while."

"Don't get me wrong," I said grimly. "*You're* not working now. *We* are. When you start to work it will be much different. You'll carry bundles, mow the lawn, scrub the floors, things like that to start with. Then when you get a little experience we'll get you a job in a factory. Then you'll learn how to operate machinery, handle tools, make yourself generally useful."

Sidney raised himself on one elbow and stared at me.

"For Heaven's sake," he gasped. "Why?"

"Why?" I sputtered. "Because that's what you've been created for. Don't you want to become a productive member of society. Don't you want to work?"

"Do you?" Sidney asked incredulously.

Well, I tell you it almost floored me. I looked helplessly at Dave and he wiped the smile from his face.

"Go on," he said innocently "tell him how much you love to work."

Sidney was shaking his head bewilderedly as he lay down again.

I BEGAN to get a little uneasy. Somehow I'd got off on the wrong foot but I intended to erase any false impressions I'd created. I explained the whole set up to Sidney again, but this time I was really eloquent.

I pictured to him the inspiring prospect of a world of robots lifting the burden of drudgery from the shoulders of mankind, leaving man free to devote his leisure to the arts and sciences. I was pretty terrific and I noticed that Sidney's restlessness seemed to be disappearing. He seemed to be lost in thought.

Encouraged, I soared on.

"It is the golden age again," I proclaimed, "and it is to be your glorious privilege to be the first of man's metallic brethren to lift from his aching shoulders the burden that—"

Sssssh," it was Dave's voice hissing warningly behind me.

"Eh?" I broke off and looked at him blankly. "What's up?"

"Sidney's asleep," he whispered. "Tone down or you'll wake him up."

"What!" I shouted. I wheeled back to Sidney. It was true. Not sleep as we know it, but a passive state resulting from total inactivity of brain cells that duplicates the symptoms of human sleep.

"Let's leave him alone," Dave said softly. "He's all tuckered out. We can try again tomorrow."

"I hope we do better than we did today," I said wearily. "We've got to get him working right or we won't have a chance at that fellowship." I turned to leave then and I noticed a tiny object glittering at my feet. I picked it up and saw that it was a small screw.

"Where'd this come from?" I asked Dave.

Dave peered at it for an instant and then a horrified look spread over his face.

"I just remembered," he cried wildly. "I lost it when I was assembling Sidney's brain this morning. I intended to look for it later but everything fitted all right," he spread his hands helplessly, "so I forgot it. Can't we take him apart and see—"

"Not a chance," I cut in. "We might never get him ready in time for the convention. We'll have to take a chance on teaching him as is." I looked down at the screw in my hand and then at

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sidney's peacefully recumbent figure. "A sweet set up," I muttered bitterly. "All our hopes pinned on him—and he's got a screw loose."

THE next morning I didn't waste any time. I routed Sidney out of the lab and led him down to the basement. I introduced him to a pile of logs and an axe and told him what I wanted. I left him gazing moodily at the wood and I returned a half hour later to see how he was progressing.

Sidney was asleep in the coal bin!

I jerked him to his feet and put him to carrying out ashes. He dropped the first basket in the middle of the living room, stumbled over it and fell into a chair that collapsed under his weight. I found him there, ten minutes later, still sprawled on the floor gazing sorrowfully at the chaos he had created.

No one could possibly have guessed from my expressionless face that something inside of me was slowly withering away. It was my cherished dream of productive, useful robot life turning up its toes.

"That'll be all, Sidney," I said heavily, "for today."

He brightened up.

"Fine," he said. "I think I'll catch forty winks down in the basement where it's cool." He clanked out of the room just as Dave walked in.

I slumped into a chair and told Dave what had happened.

"And," I concluded, "what the hell can we do?"

"You expect too much," Dave said. "We'll just have to give him a little more time. I feel sure he'll improve."

"He'd better," I said, "or we might just as well start looking for a nice cozy debtor's prison in which to spend the winter."

"Don't worry," Dave said confidently, "he'll do better."

Dave, it turned out, was a poor prophet. As the days raced by Sidney got steadily worse. Threats, bribery, cajolery all failed. Sidney was a hopeless case. He lay around in the shade with an asinine expression on his metal features, evidently quite pleased with things. Finally I threw up the sponge.

"I'm through," I stormed at Dave. "We may as well face the facts. Sidney is nothing but a worthless, lazy bum. If I was sure of my moral grounds I'd put him out of his misery with an acetylene torch."

Dave was shocked.

"You couldn't do that," he protested. "Why I may be crazy, but I can't help liking the big lug. I feel like, well," he paused and shuffled his feet awkwardly, "almost like he was a son of mine."

That was the night that Sidney disappeared.

WE missed him just before supper and after a hasty search through the house and garage we sat down to eat. It wasn't a pleasant meal. After a few mouthfuls I pushed my plate away and stood up.

"Where the devil could he be?" I muttered more to myself than Dave. "It isn't like him to walk away. He might ride, but he hates walking like poison."

At eight o'clock I was just crossing to the telephone to call the police when Dave held up his hand.

"What's that noise?" he asked nervously.

I heard it then, and as I recognized it a cold sweat started trickling down my ribs. Through the window came the sound of a voice, a tinny, bleary voice singing:

For he's a jolly good fellooooooo-
oow—
which nobooody can deeeee—ny.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dave beat me to the window and as he jerked aside the curtain my astounded eyes encountered a sight that will be stamped on my memory forever. Sidney was standing in front of the house, weaving crazily about, and as we watched in mingled astonishment and horror, he started up the stone walk that led to the door. And then we could see something was radically wrong with him.

He lurched forward, staggering with every step to keep his balance and then he stopped and stared at the house as if he were seeing it for the first time.

"Hellooooooo," he bawled at the top of his unmusical voice. "Hellooooooo, house." He bowed low and almost fell on his face.

"Ye Gods," I groaned. "What's the matter with him?" I wheeled from the window and opened the door just in time to meet Sidney face to face as he staggered the last few steps up the stone walk.

He blinked owlishly at me and then giggled.

"Hello." He peered solemnly about and then turned to me and placed one finger over his lips. "Ssssssssh," he whispered, "gotta keep quiet." He hiccoughed violently and almost toppled over. "Howsh about a lil' drink?" he beamed happily. "Noshin' like a lil' drink to fiz ya up."

"Sidney," I said desperately, "what's happened to you?"

He giggled coyly.

"Just ha' a lil' drink."

He swayed precariously and then as he raised his arm I saw what he was holding in his hand.

A gallon of penetrating oil!

And as I stared at it in bewilderment he raised it to his lips and took a long swig.

I jerked the can away from him and grabbed him by the arm to prevent him from falling. Dave, who had been watching in open-mouthed astonishment, grabbed his other arm and between the two of us we dragged Sidney into the house.

"To the lab," I snapped. "I don't know what he's been doing but I've got an awful suspicion."

We stretched him out on the lab table and I wiped the grease from his mouth and chest.

"What's the matter with him?" Dave cried. "He acts like—like he's drunk."

"He is," I said dully. "He's as drunk as a lord!"

"BUT how," Dave gasped. "How . . . I mean he's a robot. He can't—"

"Sure he's a robot," I cut in bitterly. I picked up the can of oil that Sidney had carried away from the lab and handed it to Dave. "See that. It's penetrating oil. He found it here, started drinking it instead of his usual heavy grease. With the result that all of his gears and wheels began to revolve at about three times their normal speed."

"Well I'll be darned," Dave gasped incredulously. "He's oiled up."

"That's just it," I said. "He gets the same kick from thin oil that you or I would from alcohol." I waved my hands helplessly. "On top of being a lazy, good-for-nothing loafer, he's taken to drink."

"Now don't be too hard on him," Dave said. "There's nothing wrong with a young guy goin' on a tear every now and then. He's just sowing a few wild oats."

"I suppose he'll get a bumper crop of rivets," I said sarcastically.

"Aw, don't—" Dave's voice choked in his throat. "Look," he managed to yell.

Sidney was threshing and twisting

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

around on the bench. Streams of crazed, incoherent words were pouring out of his mouth and a froth of oil bubbled over his metal lips.

"Hold him down," I yelled. "He's going crazy."

We grabbed him by the arms and held him as firmly as we could but his head continued to roll wildly on his neck.

"Thousands and thousands," he groaned. Thousands and thousands coming after me. On the wall, on the ceiling, on the floor. Thousands of 'em. Points, points, sharp points coming after me."

"What are you talking about?" Dave shouted at him.

"Pink can o p e n e r s ,'' Sidney screamed. "Pink can openers, thousands of pink can openers coming after me. Points, points, pink points coming for me."

I let go of his arms and staggered back, wiping my forehead with a shaking hand.

"By the great Jehovah," I gasped, "Sidney's got the D.T.'s."

"You mean delirium tremens," Dave demanded, "from too much liquor?"

I nodded bitterly and stared at Sidney's moaning, twitching figure. There lay our years of work and sacrifice. We had dreamed of creating a useful addition to mankind in the form of robot life. Instead we had produced a drunken bum who would never do anything worthwhile in his life except boost the stock of Standard Oil.

A WEEK later Dave and I sat in the living room and stared gloomily at one another. The representative of the Finance Company had just left. So had his truck. So had our equipment.

The convention was to open the following day and Sidney—

"Where's Sidney?" I asked dully.

"In the lab," Dave answered dispiritedly.

"Is he sober?"

"He was when I left him."

"That's fine," I said bitterly. "If he stays sober another hour he'll break his own record. Then we can get him a temperance badge and a membership in the W. C. T. U."

The last week had been hell. After his first binge Sidney had been repentant, but it hadn't lasted. We couldn't keep him away from the oil. He'd find it no matter where we hid it and we were afraid to lock it up for fear he might be tempted to wander into the village and steal some.

Gone was any hope of entering him in the convention. We'd be the laughing stock of the scientific world if we took Sidney down there.

Our equipment was gone. More creditors were nipping at our heels with foreclosures and attachments. It looked like Waterloo. And all on account of Sidney.

"I'm going to get a hack saw," I said grimly, "and commit mayhem on that drunken bum."

"You couldn't do that," Dave said accusingly. "He's a good egg. You gotta admit he's kind of funny at times."

"Funny?" I almost screamed. "So are the Marx brothers. I don't want a funny man. If I did I'd turn on the Jack Benny program. All I want is a sensible, sober, unobtrusive robot. But what do I get, what do I get—?"

"You got me!"

The metallic voice was followed by a few unmusical clanks and then Sidney clumped into the room.

"You!" I said bitterly. "Baaah!"

Sidney hiccoughed gently and sank into a chair. I was just opening my mouth to tell him to wipe the oil from his lips when the doorbell rang.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Who's that?" Dave asked.

"I hope it's the junk man," I snapped, with a spiteful glance at Sidney. "Maybe we'll get something from our invention."

I WALKED to the door, opened it and a slim red-haired girl threw herself into my arms and flung her arms around my neck.

"Surprise," she cried. "Glad to see me?"

"Sis!" I yelled. "Of course I am." I held her at arm's length and took inventory. Slender rounded figure, eager youthful features and flaming red hair.

"You haven't changed a bit," I said, "except you're better looking. How come the visit? Did they throw you out of college?"

"Just a little vacation," she answered. "So I thought I'd blow in and see how the great quest was coming."

That kind of quieted me. She meant the robot of course.

"Come on in," I said drily, "and see for yourself."

She walked into the room and her cry of delight could be heard an even city block.

"Oh you did it," she cried happily. "I think he's just *wonderful!*"

I followed her into the room. She was regarding Sidney as if he were a six-foot pile of gold bullion.

"You know Dave," I said, "but you haven't lived till you've met Sidney." I motioned to Sidney. "Stand up, you lug. This is my sister, Nancy, a very nice little girl, so be on your best behavior."

"Oh I think he's too cute for words," Nancy cried. She walked over to Sidney and held out her hand. "I'm very pleased to meet you," she said primly. "I know we'll be great friends."

I watched Sidney curiously. He was shuffling his feet awkwardly like a country bumpkin at his first dance. And then it occurred to me that Sidney had never seen a girl at such close range. Especially a girl like Nancy.

"Go ahead," I said. "Shake hands with her. She won't bite."

Sidney wiped his hand on the upholstery of the chair and then held it out as if he were sticking it into a buzz saw.

They shook hands and Nancy smiled up at him.

"I wonder if you'd do me a favor?" she said sweetly. "I left my grips outside on the porch. Would you take them upstairs, please?"

"Why — why sure," Sidney said hoarsely. "Why gosh yes, right away, thank you ma'am. I mean, you're welcome please." With a great deal more confusion he wheeled and ducked out of the room.

"Oh, he's darling," Nancy cried, as Sidney plowed up the steps with her grips. "I wish I had one just like him."

"No, you don't," I said.

In response to her surprised look, Dave and I explained the circumstances to her.

"Then," Nancy said thoughtfully, when we paused, "you've lost the equipment, and the lab goes next unless a miracle occurs."

"Right," I said. "We'll be back where we were ten years ago. Except, of course, we'll have Sidney. He'll be a big help I know."

NANCY bit her lip and we were silent until Sidney came charging back into the room with all the grace of an animated box car.

"Anything else, Miss Nancy?" he gulped.

Nancy looked thoughtfully at him and then suddenly she smiled and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crossed to the sofa and seated herself gracefully.

"Come here Sidney," she patted the pillow next to her invitingly. "I want to talk to you." She crossed her pretty legs and smiled charmingly at him.

"Well, gosh," Sidney bleated. "I don't know, I mean gosh."

I caught Nancy's wink and knew she was up to something.

"Go ahead, old man," I said. "Sit down and have a nice chat with Nancy. Dave and I'll get supper ready." I shoved him toward the sofa and grabbed Dave by the arm and pulled him out of the room.

"What's the idea?" Dave demanded, when we reached the kitchen.

"I don't know," I answered, "but Nancy's got something up her sleeve. Maybe she's going to appeal to his better nature."

Dave shook his head doubtfully.

"She can sing 'lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine,' but I doubt if it'll help. Sidney's beyond hope. He's incurable."

Which went to prove how little he knew about Sidney.

You wouldn't believe the change that came over him that night. When Nancy got through with him and brought him out to the kitchen he even looked different. As if he were shining with some new inner light.

He set the table. He passed the plates during supper. He dried the dishes. After supper he mowed the lawn, cleaned the basement, and cut about a cord of wood. To top off the entire amazing performance he went to bed sober for the first time in days.

Sidney had hit the sawdust trail and no fooling!

Dave and I were jubilant for the first time in months and we gave all credit to Nancy.

"You must have given him a powerful pep talk," I said, "because he's certainly a new man."

"You boys just didn't know how to handle him," she said smiling. "I told him if he was a real good boy today and tomorrow at the convention, I'd let him take me for a walk the next day. And he thought that was just fine."

"Well," I said, "I hope he stays on the wagon until after the convention. After that he can take up quarters in an oil refinery for all I care."

The next day started fine and I kept my fingers crossed. When I got up Sidney was down in the basement polishing himself on the buffing wheel. He helped Nancy pick up the breakfast dishes and then we all got in the car and started for the convention.

This was the day. This was the all-important day that Sidney would meet his all important test. I looked at him, riding in the back seat with Dave.

He was sniffing a violet.

I kept my fingers crossed.

FLASHLIGHT bulbs popped, reporters snapped questions and the throngs that gathered about the entrance to Convention Hall stared in wonder as Sidney made his entrance.

If I hadn't grabbed his arm and hustled him through the doors he would probably have spent the day there, bowing and scraping to the multitude like a politician.

Inside, I hurried Dave, Nancy, and Sidney down the hall to a room which had been assigned to us for the duration of the convention.

"The judges," I said to Sidney, "will want to examine you in a little while. Don't be alarmed at anything they do. They'll inspect you and probably ask you questions the rest of the day."

"Will they come down here?" Nancy asked.

"Nope," I said. "Sidney will have

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to display himself in the exhibition gallery. A page will let us know when they're ready for him."

I had some people to see then so I left them and spent the rest of the time praying silently that Sidney would behave.

A half hour later I was sitting in the exhibit arena, clenching and unclenching my hands when Dave and Nancy found me.

"He's all set," Dave said. "He'll make his appearance any minute now."

"Fine," I said and hoped it would be. The stands were crowded with people and up in the special boxes I could see several of the judges leaning forward eagerly. Everyone was anxious to see the man of metal, as the papers had dubbed him. To see whether he was just a clever mechanical toy or whether he was what we claimed: a rational, thinking robot.

I swallowed nervously as the murmuring of the audience settled to an expectant hush. There was an electric tension in the air, as the judges, the assembled scientists, and the crowd waited expectantly for our brain child to appear.

I was so nervous and excited that I didn't feel the tap on my shoulder immediately. Not until it was repeated sharply, insistently, did I turn around.

An angry, dark little man in overalls was standing behind me.

"I'ma da janitor," the little man said heatedly. "I'ma—"

"Some other time," I cut in hurriedly. "I'm busy now. Please, see me later."

"I'ma wanta see you righta now," the janitor said emphatically. "Data beeg tin guy you make, he'sa steal my oil can. I'ma wanta know whosa gon pay me for my oil can?"

I heard a thunderous roar of applause. Sidney was being announced.

"Listen, Bud," I implored, "can't you see me tomorrow about this oil. I—" I stopped suddenly, a cold fist closing over my stomach.

I grabbed the janitor by the throat.

"What did you say about oil?" I yelled.

"I'ma walk down the hall," the little man said angrily, "minda my own business, when dees beeg tin guy jumpa out and grab my oil can. 'Gotta hava bracer, gotta have a bracer' he yell and den he run like hell. Now whosa gon pay for my oil can?"

A cold sweat broke out on my forehead and trickled down my face. Sidney was off the wagon!

MY first wild thought was to somehow get to him, stop his appearance, but the next instant I knew I was too late.

To the wild roars of acclaim of the entire auditorium, Sidney walked onto the stage.

Staggered would be a better word.

My first despairing look convinced me that he was hopelessly oiled up. There was a strange belligerent roll to his walk and his mouth was parted slightly as if he were hoping to catch flies with it. From one corner of his stainless steel mouth a thin stream of oil had dribbled and spattered onto his aluminum chest.

"Oh," I groaned to Dave. "He ought to be at the Keeley Institute instead of up there."

Dave and Nancy looked helplessly at me and then back at Sidney, who by this time was weaving his way to the front of the stage. The audience craned their necks curiously as he stopped and peered foolishly about at the judges and scientists.

Then he hiccoughed and staggered back a few paces.

I groaned as I listened to the in-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

credulous murmur that arose from the spectators. The jig, I knew, was up.

I had a horrible vision of our fellowship and scientific standing vanishing forever into the mists of scorn and derision.

And then, if such a thing was possible, my horror increased.

Sidney was going to make a speech.

I closed my eyes and prayed as his metallic voice boomed clear through the hall.

"Ish jush a lota nonshense," he shouted. "Jush a lota damn nonshense. Jush to make a spectacle outa me, thash all it is." He wobbled around a few steps and seemed to calm down a trifle.

"Of coursh," he paused to hiccough, "of coursh if you jush want to look me over thash all right. But nobody's poking around in my stomach and that's final. Thash not scientific curiosity, thash jush damn noseynass."

The shocked gasp of the audience acted as a tonic to Sidney's ham-like instincts. His metal lips parted in a pleased smile and he bestowed a grateful glance upon the crowded arena.

"I'll buy a drink," he announced suddenly. "Thash what I'll do, buy a drink for the house. He staggered back from the edge of the stage. "Barteeendeerrr," he bawled at the top of his voice, "set 'em up for everybody."

THE audience was laughing now and I felt tears of humiliation stinging my eyes. Dave and I would be branded as charlatans and quacks from now on, no matter what we might accomplish.

As a man might watch his own execution, so I watched Sidney.

The laughter of the audience had evidently convinced him that he had a mission in life as an entertainer. With a coy smile he raised one clumsy foot in the air and began the first movement of something that looked like a hideous cross between the black bottom and an Old World gavotte.

With an absurd smile spreading his lips he pranced and leaped about the stage, his three hundred pounds threatening to shatter the floor boards with every step. Finally the inevitable happened. He fell. Not just an ordinary fall, but a high arching dive that dumped his metallic carcass to the floor with a splintering, jangling crash.

The audience were standing in their seats as Sidney rolled over and straightened to a sitting position. He peered dazedly, but happily, at their amazed faces and then his mouth opened wide and his voice, thickened with liquor, soared over their heads.

For I'm a jolly good fellooooooo
oow—
Which nobody can deenyyy.

He ended the song with a noisy hiccough and then collapsed on his back, out cold. Sidney had passed out cold and as I listened to the shouts and laughter of my scientific brethren I realized that with him had passed my own dreams.

"I'll get him," I said wearily to Dave, "and meet you later." I added "Don't be so gloomy. After all Sidney's happy so why shouldn't we be?"

It took me a few minutes to edge my way through the milling crowd and by the time I clambered onto the stage I saw that several of the judges were standing over Sidney's recumbent figure.

It was a humiliating moment for me, but I was beyond caring very much. I elbowed them aside and grabbed one of Sidney's arms.

"Get up," I snapped, shaking him roughly. "On your feet, the show's over."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I felt a hand grip my arm then and I turned to meet the stern, piercing eyes of old Professor Norton, head of the New York research foundation. His first words were as shocking as a lead pipe on the skull.

"Congratulations, my boy," he boomed. "You've done it; captured the human element. Your robot has a sense of humor and humor is the element that separates man from beast. Funniest imitation of a drunk I've seen in years." He winked broadly at me. "If my vote will help, that fellowship's as good as yours this minute."

My mouth opened and closed foolishly. I struggled to make some sort of reply. But it was no use. The words just weren't there.

"Tell me," a white haired judge addressed me, "does this remarkable robot of yours think up his own imitations or do you help him. I swear his imitation seemed almost too realistic."

It was at that moment that Sidney chose to hiccough noisily. I whipped out a handkerchief and snorted into it.

"A little cold," I said feebly. "Must've picked it up at the hall."

A DOZEN terrible thoughts were chasing around in my head like frightened rabbits. The judges thought Sidney had been acting. If they found out differently, they certainly wouldn't grant me a fellowship to continue robot research. Imagine anyone in their right mind wanting more steel sots like Sidney roaming around loose!

Sidney was stirring restlessly and the judges watched him anxiously.

"Is everything all right?" Professor Norton asked suspiciously.

"Fine," I lied. "Just fine."

I had to get Sidney out of the way until he sobered up.

My heart hammered against my ribs with painful bangs. A wild idea had just occurred to me.

"I think," said Professor Norton, "we should question your robot now."

"No, no," I stammered breathlessly. "He's all tuckered out. Almost in a state of collapse. Might bring on a nervous breakdown. He needs a week to recuperate, at least."

"From what?" Norton asked bluntly.

"Just last night," I replied desperately. "Sidney had to take out his own appendix. Have any of you gentlemen ever gone through that experience? I can assure you if you haven't that it's quite trying."

Professor Norton coughed embarrassedly.

"Of course old man," he said brusquely. "I didn't know."

"Then a week from now," I said quickly, "at my laboratory. You can examine Sidney thoroughly at that time."

Professor Norton frowned.

"That is satisfactory," he said slowly, "but your robot acts just as if he's passed out completely. Why doesn't he show some life?"

"He'll show some life," I promised. If my wild idea worked he'd show plenty of life. I stooped over and shook Sidney.

"Quick," I hissed in his ear, "run for your life, they're coming after you. The pink can openers are coming. Thousands of them. *Hurry!*"

Sidney's eyes opened. He peered foggily at me for an instant and then with a wild cry he clambered to his feet. He glared hysterically about him.

"My God," he yelled, "they're everywhere." With another tinny scream, he charged off the stage and disappeared down the corridor with a tremendous clatter.

"Well!" gasped Professor Norton.

"He's like that," I said weakly. "Abrupt."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I tried to get away but they plied me with questions about Sidney and it was several minutes before I could tear myself away. Then I looked for Sidney. In the halls, in our room, and with increasing worry, through the exhibit room, through the entire building. But it was no use.

Sidney had vanished.

IF you follow the papers at all you probably remember the rest of the story. Sidney had disappeared and the tabloids made quite a fuss about it. Dave and I hunted high and low for him and in our spare time, built another robot.

With Sidney as a lesson in what to avoid, we constructed a robot that was useful, efficient, productive and, in my opinion, about the most boring and uninteresting creature that ever existed.

But the judges liked him and, with many speeches and huzzahs, Dave and I were awarded the muchly coveted fellowship.

In spite of the acclaim of our scientific brethren everything seemed kind of flat. Nancy went back to college and a week or so later Dave looked across the room at our new robot—we called him number one—and said disgustedly:

"He's perfect, but who the hell wants to be surrounded by dull perfection. I wouldn't swap Sidney for a thousand like that. He was screwy and silly and unpredictable—and human. I miss the big lug."

So did I. A week dragged by and then one day I was driving across town and a tire blew out. Cursing under my breath I climbed out of the car and looked around for a service station.

Luck was against me. There was nothing but a junk yard in the block and that was on the other side of the street. I started to walk when suddenly I saw something that knocked the air out of my lungs with a whoosh and started my heart pounding with dizzy excitement.

I should have said I saw *someone* because it was Sidney.

He was lounged comfortably in the driver seat of an old model T that was parked in front of the junk yard. A battered top hat was set at a rakish angle on his metal dome and one leg was draped loosely over the side of the car. He was so crusted with rust that he probably couldn't move if he wanted.

"Sidney," I yelled excitedly. "Sidney!" I dodged through the traffic and raced to the side of the car. "Sidney," I yelled again, "it's me."

Sidney's eyelids were closed and I couldn't tell whether he heard me or not.

"What d'ya want, bud?" a thick, suspicious voice sounded behind me.

I LOOKED around. A heavy set man in overalls was standing in front of a shack built on the edge of the junkyard. He wiped his hands on a piece of cheesecloth and walked toward me. I noticed he was watching me rather curiously.

"I just paused to look at this—this," I paused and waved a hand at the car, "at this advertising stunt. Very clever."

The proprietor's lips parted in a pleased grin.

"Do you think so?" he asked contentedly. "Some kids brought dat tin dummy in here a few days ago. Dey found it in an alley. I buys it for a half a buck and stick it out here. Kinda gives a tony air to the joint. Gets a lotta attention."

I looked at Sidney closely for the first time. There was an almost beatific look of contentment on his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rusty face. Sprawled on the cushions, uselessly idle, he was in his glory.

"It's gettin' kinda rusty," the junk dealer said, "so I'm going to oil it up this aftanoon."

I smiled.

"Do that," I said, "and remember—use nice thin oil."

I knew then that I was not going to disturb Sidney. He had found the never-never land his simple soul had yearned for. Nothing to do but rest, someone to keep him pleasantly oiled up and enough attention from passers-by to gratify his exhibitionist nature.

It was Valhalla for him and it would take someone far more heartless than yours truly to destroy his paradise.

"So long," I murmured and as I turned I noticed something that brought a quick smile to my lips.

Walking away I thought of it.

It might have been an optical illusion — but I preferred to think it wasn't.

For Sidney had winked at me. As I had turned to leave one of his metal eyelids had fluttered slyly. A gesture, I knew, that bade me a happy, comradely farewell.

« FANTASTIC FACTS »

IN the last war, men from remote rural districts, where they'd never had measles or acquired natural immunity, came down in batches from the disease and then caught pneumonia. Many deaths resulted. This time, the Army has the situation well in hand.

ATTENTION, drivers! Your worries are practically over. Over in England, trucks and busses are now using fenders fabricated from molded rubber. During blackouts, collisions are naturally frequent. The new fenders change everything. They straighten out their own dents!

WAR being the least gentle art, another murderous new offensive weapon has just cropped up —the parachute land mine. Floating down from the skies, it explodes instantly on contact, instead of digging itself a crater and wasting its force. This gadget is said to be fatal to troop concentrations, machine-gun nests and artillery emplacements.

NYLON continues to demonstrate its wide range of utility. Latest use is for tennis racket strings, made possible by the development of a "giant" strand, about one-sixteenth of an inch in diameter. Wearing better than silk or gut, it is little affected by weather change and does not fray, being solid through its length. No waxing or shellac treatment is needed.

AS destructively prolific as ever is the locust. According to recent observation, the female lays from fifty to seventy-five separate deposits of eggs in a thirty-six inch square. These will produce between five thousand and seventy-five hundred locusts. There's only one way to destroy the eggs—ploughing the ground under. Once exposed to the air, the eggs can't hatch.

ONE of science's most unpleasant mysteries now seems to have been solved—the reason why fish tastes "fishy." Research reveals that diatoms and dinoflagellates, with grass, are the two most important plants on earth.

Diatoms correspond to grass in the sea and comprise the great source of food and energy for marine creatures. But they are so tiny as to be invisible. Yet in volume and importance they overshadow every other sea plant.

Microscopic in size, diatoms and dinoflagellates, which are technically referred to as phytoplankton, flourish particularly in cold water, since warm water contains less dissolved carbon dioxide.

Diatoms vary widely in specie. The main single element is green chlorophyll. Some diatoms and dinoflagellates (microscopic, with whiplike branches) are brown, yellow and even red—hence the Red Sea, where they flourish.

Fish become "fishy" and smell that way because big fish eat little fish, the cycle beginning with copepods. The copepod is the original ocean vegetarian.

Tiny, flealike crustaceans, in a direct line with the lobster and the crab, copepods eat diatoms. Then small fish, such as herring, gobble up these crustaceans. And codfish, marine birds, seals and whales, in their turn, eat the poor herring!

To carry the analogy even further: If you have a laying hen, give her repeated doses of cod liver oil, or grind up a heavy proportion of fish in her mash. In a few weeks, her eggs will smell to high heaven. "Fishy"!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shar stared up in awe at the great city as he stumbled into daylight

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

5,000 A.D.

by John York Cabot

Shar was a spiritless slave—until he found the mysterious box and read the message—and knew what it said was true

SHAR had never seen the sky. Like the thousands and thousands of his fellow toilers who were born and lived and died in the vast, underground labyrinthine cities of Earth, Shar didn't know of the sky. Shar knew little of anything except the Supreme State—and his Task.

There was a world above him, Shar knew that. Now and then—perhaps twice a year—visitors from that world came down to inspect the mines and factories in which Shar and his fellows labored.

Shar toiled in the mines, and sometimes in the middle of his digging he had looked up furtively as these visitors passed. Then after they had gone he would make up fanciful stories about them in his mind—even though he knew it was dangerous to wonder and that only work was right.

Shar's flights of imagination concerning that upper world were never wistful, and only were ignited by a tiny spark of curiosity in the back of his mind. However, he kept this spark of curiosity strictly to himself, for he had been taught that anything not concerning his Task and its relation to the Supreme State was bad.

The punishment of those who would sabotage the State was swift, and just, and somewhat terrible. Shar shuddered when he remembered some of the whispered rumors of that punishment, and how it had been administered to those who had been ungrateful to the Supreme State.

So Shar kept to his Task, and remained grateful to the Supreme State. For did not the State give him his work? And did not the State supply him with clothes, and food pills, and a compartment in the general compound for him to use for sleep?

The State gave much, Shar knew this, and asked in return only complete concentration on his Task. The State had let Shar marry, and bring his wife to his compartment for a month each year. And the State provided for the children of that union, seeing that they were raised and educated to their Task. Shar had never seen his children, for, of course, the State had assumed immediate responsibility for them. But he was grateful in the knowledge that they would always have compartments, and clothing, and food pills, and Tasks.

So Shar labored diligently at his digging and remained useful and grateful, as the words in the State pamphlets told him to, and tried to keep his curiosity in check. Until The Day.

ON the morning of The Day, Shar had been digging alone at the end

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a faintly illuminated tunnel. Digging stolidly and concentrating on his Task—until his shovel encountered an oddly hard substance. When he bent over, probing his calloused fingers into the damp clay beneath his feet, he felt something smooth and cold and hard.

Shar frowned, and squinted in the faint light, as he bent down to pick this strange object up in his hands.

It was small, the object, and as he chipped away the clay that covered it, he began to recognize it as a box. For an instant he wondered if he should summon one of the Watchers and turn it over to him. But in the next instant he decided against this, for that spark of curiosity burned in the back of his mind.

"See what is means, Shar," a tiny voice inside him was insisting. "See what it means, first."

Unaccountably, Shar's heart began to thump quickly and sweat broke out on his brow. Furtively, he looked down the long tunnel. There were no Watchers in sight. Then—even though he knew it to be wrong—Shar turned back to the box.

His first efforts to open it were fruitless. But by finally putting the box on the ground and prying it open with his shovel tip, Shar managed to snap the catch that held the lid. His hammering heart told him that he was taking a great chance, as he bent to pick up the open box, but his curiosity was now a flame over which he no longer had control.

Shar's hands shook as he lifted the box and breathlessly peered into it. And then he was filled with a sudden anger and sharp disappointment as his eyes took in the contents. He was about to hurl the box back to the ground thinking of covering it over again with clay so that his crime would not be discovered. That was when his eyes suddenly narrowed, peering closer at the contents, puzzledly.

He didn't hurl the box to the ground. He sat down, unconscious of the risk he ran if a Watcher found him that way, and leaned against the wall. He held the contents of the box in his gnarled paws, regarding them intently, utterly absorbed.

AND so it was that Shar was apprehended by the Watchers some four hours later. But he was not caught in the tunnel assigned to him. He was not caught sitting alongside his shovel with the contents of the box in his hands. He was caught several miles away from there, shouting wildly to other tunnel toilers in other shafts.

He was tracked down only after his words had been carried to many others of his fellows—who in turn breathed them through the underground labyrinths, echoing them endlessly onward.

And thus it was that Shar—shackled and beaten—was taken by Guards into the World Above, and for the first time saw the sky. Saw the sky, and other things which he had never dreamed existed—huge buildings, tubes shooting through the air, and many people whose faces did not bear the pallor of the underworld. Until at last he was led into a gigantic hall, and pushed stumbling before a great dais on which ten men sat.

"The traitorous prisoner!" Shar's guards announced, their words ringing loudly in the vast hall.

Then one of the men on the dais was speaking, and Shar noted that he was like the others in this Above World—like the visitors who had sometimes inspected the mines.

"This is the undercreature accused of treason to the Supreme State?" The man on the dais asked. "This is the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man who carried words of lies to his fellows?" And Shar heard the guards answer affirmatively.

Then, to Shar, the man on the dais said:

"You have sabotaged the State, and are here to be sentenced for your crime!"

But Shar, even to his own surprise, did not cringe, did not tremble. He held his head high, and his words were strong as he answered. "I have a right—" he began.

But Shar never completed those words.

His last impression was one of terrible pain, and he slumped to the floor seconds after his guards crushed his skull with their merciless blows. And then, while they stood breathing heavily over the lifeless body of the creature from the underworld, the man on the dais addressed the guards.

"You acted wisely, justly, and swiftly in silencing those treasonable words," the man on the great dais said. Then, as in afterthought: "This is the first breath of treason in three thousand years. Have you the evidence that you were to present?"

And then the guard closest to the dais stepped forward. In his hands he held papers, yellowed and dry. The man on the dais took them wordlessly, glancing at the ancient lettering upon them.

"We hold these rights," the script on the yellowed sheets read, *"to be self-evident: that all men are created equal—"* the man on the dais paused, his face whitening. Then he read on: *"That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are, Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."*

Purpling with rage, the man on the great dais rose, tearing the yellowed sheets again and again, while the guards trembled at his wrath . . .

But deep in the bowels of the underworld, creatures like Shar were echoing those words along the dim, labyrinthine cities. And the murmur was swelling . . . swelling.

« IT CAN'T BE DONE »

SCIENCE, working in the matter of aerotechnics, has developed certain absolute axioms in regard to flight of any sort. It has established that certain weights, shapes, and angles in relation to the total wing spread of any object determine whether or not that object can fly. These rules are absolute, scientific. However, the poor bumblebee, whose weight and body size in relation to his wing spread makes it utterly impossible for him to fly, doesn't realize that science confines his adventures to the ground. He doesn't realize it, poor bug, and goes ahead and flies anyway!—*Guy Fauldes.*

WHY NOT BE AN EXPERT ACCOUNTANT? YOU CAN!

MORE and more opportunities—that is Accountancy's appeal to ambitious people like YOU! Government, industry, thousands of firms, are needing trained accountants. C. P. A.'s and executive accountants earn $2,000 to $10,000 yearly; new conditions are steadily increasing the demand! LaSalle trains you at home in your spare time; among our alumni are over 10 per cent of the C. P. A.'s in United States. Training prepares you for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Staff of C. P. A.'s personally supervises every phase of your training. You do not need previous experience, for we start you from the beginning. Numerous new opportunities now waiting in Governmental and industrial lines warrant your considering this subject carefully! So act now—investigate LaSalle Accountancy training's possibilities without delay.

Write today for free 48-page booklet, "Accountancy, the Profession That Pays"!

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY • A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION

DEPT. 575-H CHICAGO, ILL.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The 1941 Directory of Photographic Equipment

BRINGS YOU ALL THE ANSWERS

THIS *INVALUABLE* BUYING GUIDE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT COMES AS AN *EXTRA* FEATURE OF THE *GIANT* MAY ISSUE AT *NO* EXTRA COST TO YOU! IT'S COMPLETE, RELIABLE, ILLUSTRATED!

Camera fans! *Now* you can forget doubts and questions in selecting your photographic equipment! *Now*, right at your very finger-tips, you can have the most *comprehensive* buying guide of cameras and supplies ever assembled. Yes, POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY'S *new* 1941 Directory of Photographic Equipment, *bigger and better than ever*, makes it *easy* for you to compare similar products of all the different manufacturers.

DESCRIBES ALL KINDS OF EQUIPMENT!

You'll be *amazed* to see how many cameras are on the market, as compared with just a few years ago. You'll be *surprised* to learn about the number of gadgets that are *now* being made to help the photographer obtain results with greater ease. But this valuable Directory is not confined to cameras and gadgets . . . it extends to films, filters, flash-bulbs, etc. (Note complete listing to the right.)

AS HANDY TO USE AS THE TELEPHONE BOOK!

Imagine what a help this *illustrated* Directory can be to *you!* Each type of equipment—cameras, projectors, enlargers, etc.—is *classified together*. In the case of items such as films all the characteristics and speed ratings are given. In the camera listing you will find the trade name and model, film dimensions, lens equipment, shutter speeds, available accessories, and other pertinent information. Retail prices are also quoted for each item together with the name and address of the maker or distributor. And what's more, the convenient *alphabetized* index enables you to find, *instantly*, the exact item you are looking for. Yes, with this illustrated Directory you can sit in your armchair at home and "inspect" all of the photographic equipment that would take days in a camera department to see!

MAKE SURE OF YOUR DIRECTORY ISSUE NOW!

Remember, this *invaluable* buying guide of photographic equipment comes as an extra feature of the *giant* May POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY at *no extra cost!* The print order of this spectacular Directory issue is *limited*, however, so don't get shut out. Act *promptly!* Go to your favorite newsstand or camera store *today* and get *your* copy!

Complete Directories on These Subjects:

- ☆CAMERAS, Movie
- ☆CAMERAS, Still
- ☆ENLARGERS
- ☆ENLARGING EASELS
- ☆EXPOSURE METERS
- ☆FILMS, Movie
- ☆FILMS, Still
- ☆FILTERS
- ☆FLASHBULBS
- ☆FLASH SYNCHRONIZERS
- ☆FRONT LENSES
- ☆LENSES, New
- ☆MOVIE EDITING and TITLING EQUIPMENT
- ☆PRINT DRYERS
- ☆PRINTERS
- ☆PRINTING EXPOSURE METERS
- ☆PRINTING PAPERS
- ☆PROJECTOR SCREENS
- ☆PROJECTORS, Movie
- ☆PROJECTORS, Still
- ☆RANGEFINDERS
- ☆SPOTLIGHTS

GIANT MAY ISSUE

Popular Photography

NOW ON SALE AT ALL NEWSSTANDS AND CAMERA STORES! 25c

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

»»» Introducing ««« THE AUTHOR

WHEN we asked Mr. Cummings for a sketch for this department, he wrote us a letter, sent a book jacket with editorial comments on the fly-leaf, and a poem written by his daughter, Betty Starr. We present here a biographical sketch culled from these sources.

Mr. Cummings is reticent in talking about himself. He would much rather discuss his fourteen year old daughter, Betty. At the age of four she had already traveled some twenty thousands miles, been shipwrecked, and been through three hurricanes. All of which would indicate that Mr. Cummings does not live a very quiet life himself.

RAY CUMMINGS

Adds Mr. Cummings to the above: "Betty's mother and I are very proud of her. Last year, at 13, she wrote her first fiction story, and it sold to *Liberty* Magazine."

It seems that literary ability runs in the Cummings family.

That little story in *Liberty* brought astonishing response. A personal letter from Kirsten Flagstad, the opera singer; and one from the White House—a personal note from Mrs. Roosevelt. And the story had been on the stands only a day or two when it was put over the radio; and subsequently the child herself was interviewed over the radio. She is now, at 14, starting her senior year at boarding school—the youngest senior in the school's history.

Mr. Cummings goes on to say:

"Incidently, Elizabeth Starr—not as such—but as Ray Cummings' daughter, I should think must be somewhat known to pseudo-science fans. I recall that some published mention of her when she was four—little girl with long gold cirls, etc., brought an amusing incident to me at sea. Coming home from Bermuda, I was on deck with the child; was accosted by a young man who said he had been reading my stories, had never seen a picture of me, but was I Ray Cummings?—that certainly looked like Ray Cummings' little daughter.

"And I recall, in AMAZING STORIES not so long ago, you reported the N. Y. Convention of Science Fiction fans, with mention that I had dropped in there one afternoon. Though you did not mention it there was a tall, reserved, very quiet young woman, with me. She was Elizabeth Starr, 13, trying very hard to look older.

"I think she succeeded, for she was surrounded by young men, demanding her autograph, and taking her photo. Flashlight bulbs popped all around her. If opportunity arises, she would like very much to have you convey to those young men her sincere appreciation.

"Her mother — Gabrielle Wilson — also writes fiction when domestic duties will permit. But recently she has engaged herself in anti-fifth-column work. Often, as we all know, public speakers—under the guise of something or other—stand on street corners and prove themselves nothing but masquerading fifth columnists. One of Mrs. Cummings' most recent activities is to make the crowd realize it and cease listening. She seems to have a very special genius for accomplishing that result."

We might quote "Bob" Davis, famed editor, who said of him: "He is a Verne returned and a Wells going forward." Other critics have called him "The American H. G. Wells." It is certainly true that he has a style of presentation, and the type of imagination that made Wells and Verne famous. However, to this is added a true American originality.

Cummings has a flair for things scientific as evidenced by the fact that while in Princeton University he accomplished the remarkable feat of absorbing three years' of physics in that many months.

His five years' association with Thomas A. Edison as the latter's personal assistant also added to Cummings' knowledge of the scientific. His bizarre early life, living on orange plantations in Porto Rico, striking oil in Wyoming, gold seeking in British Columbia, timber cruising in the North, before he was twenty, also left its imprint.

(Concluded on page 145)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Quiz Page

The following quiz has been prepared as a pleasant means of testing your knowledge of things scientific. We offer it solely for the pleasure it gives you, and with the hope that it will provide you with many bits of information that will help you to enjoy the stories in this magazine.

Count indicated points for each correct answer. If your score is between 80 and 100 you're better than Mr. Average Man. If you score between 50 and 80 *you* are Mr. Average Man. If your total is below 50, don't worry; the law of averages will catch up with you yet!

MANIPULATIONS IN MATH

(worth 20 points)

Arrange the numbers seen in the squares so that the columns down and across, as well as both diagonal columns, will total to the same number. When—or if—this is accomplished, state the number of solutions possible in this problem.

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

STAR GAZING

(worth 20 points, five points each)

(a) Astronomy is a very ancient science, and many have been the brilliant men who have made the study what it is today. We're sure you know some of these men, but try to rearrange their names so that they follow in proper chronological relation to one another.

Darwin, Gould, Herschel, Maskelyne, Hevelius, Brahe.

(b) We can attribute the discovery of the motion of the solar apogee to one race in particular. That race is,

Phoenicians, Gaels, Scots, Arabians, Grecians.

(c) Ptolemy was strictly the big shot in the field of astronomy until one of the following men came along to explode the theories he had advanced.

Thales, Copernicus, Ibn-Yunis, Pasteur.

(d) Without telescopic equipment of the finest sort, an astronomer would be out of luck. One of the following names is legendary in the history of telescopic science.

Louis IV, Julius Caesar, Einstein, Alvan Clark, Pouillet.

ARMCHAIR ARCHAEOLOGISTS

(worth 20 points, 4 points each)

The doping-out of cuneiforms, hieroglyphics, etc., is usually the work of the fellows who unearth ancient monuments. However, using some very common other alphabets scrambled, let's see how many of them you can recognize and put in their proper places.

Phoenician Russian Gaelic Greek Arabic

WHO AM I?

(worth 30 points, 15 points each)

(a) It's up to you to figure out who I am. I was born in Germany in 1811, studied at Göttingen University, not to mention Paris and Vienna. Later I was Experimental Chemistry Professor at Heidelberg University. If you've ever studied high school chemistry you've probably used my name more than that of any other scientist, for I invented something very necessary to laboratory experimentation.

(b) Although I'm considered pretty much of a modern among today's men of science, I died not so very long ago. I was born in Mass. around 1849. In a farm boyhood, I learned to love nature and resolved then to devote my life to the study and improvement of it and its rescources. In 1875 I went to Santa Rosa, California, to establish an experimental farm. Soon I was crossing darned near everything in plant life, and eventually was world famous as a wizzard of horticulture.

YOUR KEN OF CHEM

(worth 10 points, 5 each)

(a) One among the following races was superior to all others in its knowledge of Chemistry. Which?

English, Phoenicians, Romans, Germans, Egyptians, Persians.

(b) Here are some very common chemical terms with definitions, scrambled of course. Fix 'em up.

Oxygen—Mn
Ferrous sulphate—$FeSO_4$
Lead—Si
Manganese—O
Silicon—Pb

(Answers on page 146)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

READER'S PAGE

WANTS THE AMAZON'S CHILDREN

Sirs:

I am writing for myself and a friend to say that we would both like to hear about the further adventures of the two children of the Golden Amazon. We enjoy the magazine very much.

Yours truly,
Marion L. Foster,
17 Pleasant St.,
Hyde Park, Mass.,

OSCAR EVERY ISSUE?

Sirs:

The January cover is positively SUPER. Such colors. The feature yarn is excellent. What a yarn. I want to see Oscar every issue . . . he's tops. The Dynamouse was swell, reminded me of "The Hungry Guinea Pig," as it threatens a city. So long 'til next time.

Harry Schmarje,
318 Stewart Rd.,
Muscatine, Iowa.

McGIVERN TOPS

Sirs:

I have just finished my first copy of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES but this is my second letter to you. Maybe you'll like it better than the first although I have a few brickbats to throw. First of all I wasn't crazy about the cover. I liked the story all right though.

Story I enjoyed most was *Adopted Son Of The Stars* by William P. McGivern. I liked it because it was funny and entertaining. The writing was above the average in my opinion.

Next I would put Wilcox's *Secret Of The Stone Doll* because of the powerful "punch" ending. After that Burroughs and O'Brien just about split even although Burroughs' story was longer.

Then comes Oscar—very good. Finally I would put *Twenty-fifth Century Sherlock* which was very good too. I liked *The Thought Robot* too, but it seemed there was something wrong with it.

I like the humor in your books and I hope you don't change this policy. The Editor's column is one of your best features. Keep it up. I guess in the long run I just like the whole darned book.

So I'll be looking for it from now on.

Edward Dusolenski,
Chicago, Illinois.

If you like humor, you'll find more of McGivern's work coming up constantly. He's got several humor stories in the house now. And "Sidney, The Screwloose Robot," in this issue, is certainly one of his best.—Ed.

WANTS McCAULEY

Sirs:

The January cover was indeed a masterpiece, done by a master artist. The blended colors are the kind that please the eyes. More of McCauley for the front covers.

Leading stories for same issue were "The Golden Amazon Returns" and "The Dynamouse." "Our Lord The Sun" was a very interesting article. I desire others of the same type.

Can you not use the back cover of F. A. for colored pictures like AMAZING? If this idea is ever considered or acted upon you might choose subjects that are popular with the fans.

I anticipate great enjoyment when authors Norman and Burroughs return.

Albert Betts,
18 Wascana Avenue,
Toronto, Ontario.

How do you like the Mac Girl on this cover? You see, we answer your requests even before you make 'em. And also, our articles by Millard, which you praise, will continue. There'll be more in future issues.

We have ad contracts for the back cover of F. A. but we will continue back covers on AMAZING STORIES.—*Ed.*

ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS

Sirs:

Thanks for printing my last letter to FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. It was a great surprise to me.

I want to give my opinion of your features in AMAZING STORIES Magazine. Questions and Answers is a great help in answering the many disputes that I have encountered. Science Quiz is also a great feature for testing one's mental knowledge of our Earth and universe. My favorite feature, Discussions, gives the reader a chance to get whatever he may think about the mag off his chest.

Oh, yes, I want to know if it is possible to obtain some book or scrapbook of "The Romance of Elements" which is featured in your magazine FANTASTIC ADVENTURES?

Yours until Adam Link rusts.

Everett Robertson,
1140 S. 10th St.,
Slaton, Tex.

Questions and Answers has been discontinued in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMAZING STORIES, *due to lack of interest. "Romance of the Elements" is a long way from complete, as yet, and the possibility of issuing them in book form has not been considered seriously. However, you could clip them each month for your own scrapbook. If you lack any back issues, they can be obtained from our circulation department. —Ed.*

". . . AND YOW!"

Sirs:

Just read your magazine FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, and yow! What a kick! It is without doubt the best magazine I have ever read of this type. Every adventure a "great slam." How do you pack so much grand reading in one issue?

Keep the magazine small; the size is much easier to handle than the large size ones.

Why not have a quarterly? It ought to be a sure fire hit.

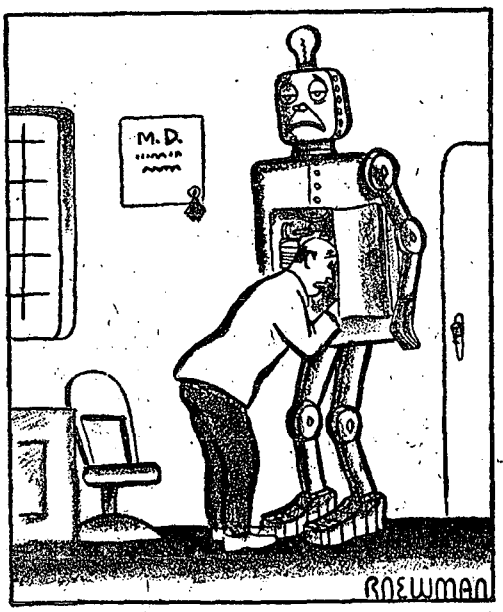
Marianne Ferguson,
20 S. Buffum St.,
Worcester, Mass.

We'll do some thinking about your suggestion. Many thanks for your compliments. We appreciate them deeply.—Ed.

MORE STRAIGHT GOODS

Sirs:

Quite right; that letter *was* straight goods. Now before I wade into the April issue perhaps I'd better elucidate a little more on "Battering Rams of Space." First, let me apologize for calling it junk. I don't know why I said that, but the fact remains that I did. The first story in the series *was* bad, and perhaps it carried over very strongly. At any rate, I re-read "Battering Rams" and found that it wasn't such a bad story, after all. There were some poor parts, some fair parts, some good parts, and some very excellent parts. However, there is, in my opinion, some indefinable something wrong with the greater portion of the story. It still gets last place. Sometime in the very near future I intend to write a story for you which will put all your authors to shame. Then Wilcox will have an opportunity to pick my work apart at his leisure; maybe.



"What you need is a good dose of castor oil"

And so we trip gaily into the present issue, which wasn't quite so good this time. Cover: so-so. Not up to the standard St. John has set for himself and a little disappointing. Feature novel: good. Hansen reminds me of Burroughs, with a little dash of H. Rider Haggard. Best story in the issue was, of course, Rocklynne's "Big Man." Might not have been as good as you would have us believe, but still a swell story. McGivern's tale: not so hot. Bernal's story: swell fun. "Priestess of the Sleeping Death:" different plot from Neil R. Jones' recent stories, but I'm getting sick and tired of the Durna Rangue. We'll forget Wilcox's story for the present while I make some suggestions.

To begin with, I have some ideas about your QUARTERLY. My suggestion is this: why not put out a real QUARTERLY? Say, something in the old 11¼ x 8½ size with 100 pages, selling for 50c. I can just see the first issue! That rumor about Dr. Smith has just materialized, and printed in bold letters, across a brilliant cover by Paul, you have the following: "Ultra Skylark," the greatest story yet written by Dr. E. E. Smith—with five stories by other prominent authors." You could print a long novel, or two, or three, and some shorts each issue. I'm sure you'd find enough purchases, so how about it?

And now to "Invisible Raiders." It was pretty good. Surprised? It was a great improvement over "Battering Rams;" the only thing that bothered me was the constant use of that word "zang." It sounds terrible! Take this for instance:

Zang! Congratulations on your fifteenth anniversary! Zang! I hope that AMAZING lasts for years to come. Zang! I am feverishly awaiting your May issue. Zang! 240 pages for twenty-five cents.

ZANG!

Silly, isn't it?

Leonard Marlow,
5809 Beechwood Ave.,
Indianapolis, Ind.

It seems to us that another quarterly would be just a bit too much. We'd be confused ourselves, with three magazines on the stands with the same title. Zang!—Ed.

1941 CONVENTION!

Sirs:

As most of you know, the World's Science Fiction Convention is going to be held in Denver, Colorado, July 4th, 5th, and 6th, sponsored by the Colorado Fantasy Society. The Convention Committee fervently hopes that all readers and fans of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

science fiction will make this convention if possible. Following is the last minute pertinent information pertaining to this gala event of science and fantasy fiction:

It will be held at Denver's fashionable hotel, the Shirley-Savoy, in the Colorado and Centennial Rooms. The rates of this hotel are extremely reasonable, more reasonable in fact than any of the other larger hotels in town including the YW and YMCA, and we'd appreciate it if all of you that will, room here, for if a hundred delegates put up here we will be able to get the hall free, and consequently have more funds for elaborate preparations and entertainment.

All fans who write ahead will be met at the bus station or depot and driven to the hotel. If your arrival is unheralded you may get in touch with us by calling CHerry 1067 (Roy Hunt). The opening session will begin promptly at 9 A. M., Friday the 4th. The program has not as yet been worked out in too fine a detail before this goes to press, but we are more or less certain of the following:

Friday morning from 9 to 12 will be an informal gathering where old acquaintances are renewed, new ones made, and autographs exchanged. Here you will meet many of the editors, authors, and fans that you have seen in the various science and fantasy magazines, and above all, Denvention's honor guest, Robert A. Heinlein. Editors Palmer, Tremaine, Weisinger, Pohl, Wollheim, and Lowndes are expected. Mr. Tremaine, incidentally, is offering a $25 cash award to the fan who overcomes the greatest obstacles in making the Denvention. Authors E. E. Smith, Robert Heinlein, Willard E. Hawkins, D. B. Thompson, A. E. Van Vogt, Ross Rocklynne, A. G. Birch, Ralph Milne Farley, R. R. Winterbotham, S. D. Gottesman, Charles Tanner, and many others are expected. Such famous fans as Ackerman, Tucker, Madle, Widner, Morojo, Freehafer, Reinsberg, Shroyer, Dikty, Gilbert, Korshak, Bronson, Wright, Fortier, Tullis, Yerke, Knight and countless others from all parts of the continent will be present.

In the afternoon there will be speeches pertaining to various phases of fantasy by leading science fictionists. That evening there will be the traditional costume party where everyone that can, dresses as some science fictional character. Punch, beer, and wine will be free, and after the party the equally traditional auction will be held, Korshak presiding, where the delegates may buy the original cover paintings and interior illustrations of your favorite fantasy artists, and numerous other collectors' items to grace your den and collection.

Saturday (5th) will be a meeting of the Colorado Fantasy Society limited to members only. Incidentally, all of you fans and readers, whether you plan to attend or not, and who wish to further

The BLACK PIRATES of BARSOOM!

by EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Deep beneath Mars lies the valley Dor, cavern-world of the Black Pirates of Barsoom. And in Dor lies Throxus, the only remaining ocean of a dying world. Nowhere on Mars is adventure keener, nor danger greater. And to the fighting blades of John Carter and Pan Dan Chee, it offered a challenge they had to answer. But perhaps there would not have been a challenge had it not been for the beauty of Llana of Gathol . . . if it had not been for the . . . *Black Prince!* Don't fail to follow the adventures of these three characters in Edgar Rice Burroughs' newest novel.

ONE OF THE SIX GREAT STORIES IN THE THRILL-PACKED JUNE ISSUE OF

AMAZING STORIES

NOW ON SALE At All Newsstands

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHILDLESS Wives WHO WISH BABIES!

Doctor's Information SENT FREE!

Concerning simple way followed at home by which the female organs in relievable functional sterility may be assisted so that motherhood may then so often be easily possible! YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND MAY LATER THANK THE DAY YOU SENT FOR THIS FREE INFORMATION. Women from over the Nation write us of their joy in becoming mothers at last! FOR FREE COPY write to Warner Co., 322 W. Lake St., Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Those With Distress From STOMACH ULCERS

TRIAL OFFER

Due to Gastric Hyperacidity

should avail themselves of our Special Trial Offer of a simple home treatment which has given relief, right from the start, in thousands of cases. For a limited time only, we will gladly send our regular $1.25 size for only 35c. This 7-day treatment should convince you that it is amazingly effective, although inexpensive. The treatment does not necessitate a liquid diet nor interfere with your day's work. Send 35c for this unusual Trial Offer and ask for our informative FREE Booklet on Gas, Acidity, Sour Stomach, Acid Stomach, Ulcers or other distress caused by Gastric Hyperacidity. TWIN CITY VON CO., Dept. 203B, Minneapolis, Minn.

SICKNESS OR ACCIDENT

Thousands of people are disabled every hour of the day. Don't let sickness or accident find you unprepared.

READ THIS GUARANTEE

We guarantee that all just claims will be paid promptly in strict accordance with the provisions of this policy.

Alfred Sylvanus, Pres.

WE PAY YOU CASH

$5,000.00 Accumulated Benefits for Accidental Death, Loss of Hands, Eyes or Feet

$100.00 PER MO. For Accident or Sickness

$100.00 Emergency Cash

$100.00 Hospital Expense

** All as specified in the policy*

COSTS ONLY $1 PER MONTH

The "Security" Sickness and Accident Policy gives your family quick cash when income is stopped. Pays CASH protection of $25.00 a week up to ten weeks for accident—$25.00 each week for sickness, as specified in policy—and up to $5,000.00 for accidental death, loss of hands, eyes or feet. Also other liberal features. Half benefits after age 60. Examine this new Security Policy on our 10-day Free Inspection Offer!

NO PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

Any person may apply. Ages 16 to 75, man or woman. No physical examination. The Security Policy sold by mail. No agent will call. The Arcadia Mutual Casualty Company is a safe company—not an association or assessment company. It has the approval of the Illinois State Insurance Department.

SEND NO MONEY Just mail the coupon for complete information. You alone judge and decide. Don't wait until it's too late.

THE ARCADIA MUTUAL CASUALTY CO., Desk 22-C 75 East Wacker Drive, Chicago, Ill. No Agent Will Call

Please send me complete information and tell me how I may get the "Security" Policy for 10-Day Free Inspection without obligation.

Name .....

Address .....

the cause of science and fantasy fiction should send us your fifty cents membership fee, for which you will receive a beautiful modernistic membership card, a number of booster stickers for your letters, and the official CFS publication, The CFS Review.

The afternoon will be an open business meeting of fandom discussing various problems paramount to fans, such as where the next convention will be held. The rest of the program is not yet decided upon, although within the realm of possibility is a comical science fiction play written and produced by the pro science fiction author, Willard E. Hawkins, and a feature length scientifiction movie, if possible either H. Rider Haggard's SHE or Jules Verne's THE MYSTERIOUS ISLAND. Sunday evening the Denvention will officially terminate with a banquet in honor of Robert A. Heinlein.

Anyone requiring further information should contact Lew Martin at 1258 Race Street, Denver. Memberships may also be sent to this address in either cash or money orders. No checks or stamps, please.

Let's all pull together and make this, the Denvention, *the* most successful convention ever, and one to be remembered far into the future.

The Denvention Committee,
Olon F. Wiggins,
Lew Martin,
Roy Hunt,
Denver, Colo.

MR. X

Sirs:

I have not been reading FANTASTIC ADVENTURES or AMAZING STORIES for a very long time, but I have been reading them long enough to form my opinion about the different types of stories. From the picture on the cover of the January issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES I thought that this was going to be a colossal story, but after I had read it I changed my mind. It was not bad, but it could have been a lot better. (By the way, I forgot to mention the name of the story, "The Floating Robot.") The cover of this FANTASTIC ADVENTURES was very good; one of the best I have seen.

The best stories in this issue are "The Golden Amazon Returns" and "The Horse that Talked." "Dr. Kelton, Body Snatcher" was quite good, but ended too abruptly. As to "The Vanishing Witness": a little too impossible. If the Dynamouse had eaten the cheese with that high explosive, how is it that it didn't go off while chewing it? And as far as I know, explosives are poisons and would have killed the mouse. Again why would the prof. leave this deadly explosive lay around carelessly where it could easily get knocked off by himself or by Mr. Hoskins, the reporter?

Mr. X,
Cargill Ave.,
Half-Way-Tree P. O.,
St. Andrew, Jamaica.

Explosives are poisons, Mr. X, but U-235 is not an explosive. It is an isotope of Uranium. Its

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

atomic power can be released under the right conditions. As for being careless, a lot of people are!—Ed.

O'BRIEN'S REPUTATION SAVED!

Sirs:

Although I am not a regular reader of your magazine, I happened to be glancing through the pages of your May issue when I chanced upon some correspondence on the "Reader's Page" which caused much amusement on my part. It seems that a deluded gentleman from Seattle, Washington by the name of Frank Cook has accused the noble author of "The Floating Robot" of certain inaccuracies concerning radio hams in his story. Mr. Cook seems to be under the impression that a "ham" operating his station under the influence is an exceedingly rare if not a non-existent occurrence. I beg to differ with Mr. Cook in this assumption, and wish to state further that if he ever happens to be in this part of the country he may drop in and pay me a visit, during which I will give him a demonstration of this procedure. As for the profanity situation, I can only suggest that Mr. Cook do more listening on the twenty meter phone and c.w. bands and perhaps he will change his opinion.

I hope that this communication has helped in the clearing of the author's name, and has also helped to straighten out a few ideas in certain peoples' minds.

Dick Dunham,
W1LCA,
Bass River, Mass.

Thanks, Dick, for admitting that "hams" are human too! And maybe we'll do a little listening for you ourselves. Only one caution: if you hear any funny noises, turn off your set. There might be another floating robot around! They're wuss'n pink elephants!—Ed.

OW!!!

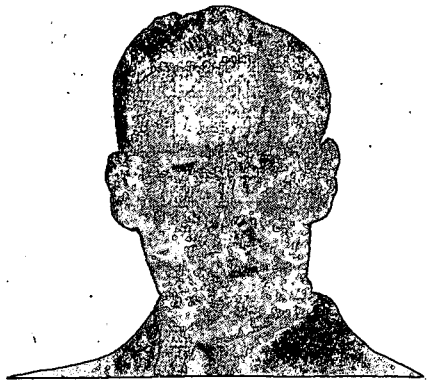
Sirs:

In regard to March, 1941 issue, I might say that a more morbid collection of tripe has never been my displeasure to read before. In matters pertaining to illustration and material, the less said the better.

I must, however, since this is another one of those fool letters that readers write every now and then and nobody pays any attention to, say something about the contents of this month's issue.

To begin—for heaven's sake, why do you have to dig up artists that make cartoon sketches and call them drawings? The illustrations for *Slaves of the Fish Men*—which was incidentally one of the cheapest examples of the blood and brawn type of adventure story sneaking into the pages of a sf mag I've ever seen—were so disgusting I covered one side of the page with one hand while reading the tripe on the other side.

Some people call Mr. Burroughs an excellent sf writer. I think Mr. Burroughs writes good



"Haven't got what it takes? Who? ME?"

Yes, it often is a shock to discover what others really think about you. And while they may be completely wrong, still . . .

Why not *prove* that you're going places—why not make more money?

Do you *dare* say you lack the opportunity when thousands are winning raises, promotion, through LaSalle's new home-study training?

Let us send you free that fascinating book: "Ten Years' Promotion in One." Write for it *today!* There's no obligation—nothing but a challenge, an inspiration, that can make money for you!

Ask also for one of these interesting books on *your* chosen field.

LaSalle Extension University

A Correspondence Institution

Dept. 575-R, Chicago

Please send me, without cost or obligation, "Ten Years' Promotion in One" and also the book on the business field checked below:

☐ Accountancy ☐ Law ☐ Traffic Mgt.
☐ Business Mgt. ☐ Modern Salesmanship

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Flush Poisons From Kidneys and Stop Getting Up Nights

Be Healthier, Happier — Live Longer

When you can get for 35 cents a safe, efficient and harmless stimulant and diuretic that should flush from your kidneys the waste matter, poisons and acid that are now doing you harm, why continue to break your restful sleep by getting up through the night?

Don't be an EASY MARK and accept a substitute—Ask for Gold Medal Haarlem Oil Capsules. GET GOLD MEDAL—the original—the genuine. Look for the Gold Medal on the box—35 cents.

Other symptoms of weak kidneys and irritated bladder may be backache, puffy eyes, shifting pains, burning or scanty passage. Don't accept a substitute.

FALSE TEETH

LOW AS $6.85

90 DAYS' TRIAL
TEST THEM
EXAMINE THEM

We make FALSE TEETH for you by mail from your own impressions. You have satisfaction of MONEY BACK GUARANTEE. Customers report satisfaction but you be your own judge. WRITE TODAY for FREE BOOKLET and MATERIAL

SEND NO MONEY

CLEVELAND DENTAL SUPPLY COMPANY
Dept. 50-E1, East St. Louis, Illinois

Did "Diamond Jim" Have Stomach or Ulcer Pains?

It is hardly likely that Diamond Jim Brady could have eaten so voraciously if he suffered after-eating pains. Sufferers who have to pay the penalty of stomach or ulcer pains, indigestion, gas pains, heartburn, burning sensation, bloat and other conditions caused by excess acid should try a 25c box of UDGA Tablets. They must help or money refunded. At drug stores everywhere.

HOW GAMBLERS WIN

Twelve ways Professionals win with fair dice. No switching. No practice. One hundred keys and codes on twenty-four different backs. 50 cents. BEAT THE CHEAT, 28 pages of exposes, $1.00. The great OPEN BOOK, written in words of fire, 155 pages of exposes, $3.50. Free catalog included.

Box 2488 SPECIALTY EXPOSE Kansas City, Mo.

Professional Model

SEND NO MONEY!—Save Money!

TRANSPARENT 60 Days' Trial ROOFLESS PARTIAL

We make FALSE TEETH for *you* by MAIL from *your own* mouth-impression. Money-Back Guarantee of Satisfaction.

$6.85 to $35

FREE Free impression material, directions, catalog.

U. S. Dental Co., Dept. 5-13, Chicago

fiction, insofar as adventure is concerned. But his sf is, to say the least, lousy!

In fact, the whole issue was filled with detective and gripping horror tales. Recommended for the ash can, (1) *Death Walks in Washington* (it ought to keep right on walking), (2) *Secret of the Stone Doll* (which could go in the now defunct *South Sea Stories).* There were two good stories that might be passable—*Beyond the Time Door,* and *Adopted Son of the Stars.* As a whole, this issue was a flop!

Arnold Kolner,
8810 West Gray,
Houston, Texas.

P. S. Dump *Twenty-Fifth Century Sherlock* in the ash can too.

It is with some trepidation that we lift our head out of the bomb shelter and meekly say: "but you read the page over which you weren't holding your hand." We figure you for a pal, because of that. Keep on reading us. Maybe we'll surprise you.—Ed.

"EXACT" COPY?

Sirs:

Well, imagine that, you didn't cut out much (too much) of my last letter; I am amazed! ! ! Could it be that the old man is going soft on us?

If that shadow on the cover resembled anything remotely related to a Tyrannosaurus rex, I'll eat it (the Tyrannosaurus rex, of course). It looked more like a goat—and it got mine.

So F.A. is going monthly, huh? That's fine, but when is it going weekly? And trimmed edges? And slick paper?

For once the feature story took first place which it hasn't done for a h— of a while. "Three Eyes in the Dark" was a fine story in its class, but it was outclassed . . . Wilcox would do better if he stuck to science. "The Masterful Mind of Mortimer Meek" cannot be rated because it was almost an exact copy of a story appearing in another mag several months ago. "Moons of Death" was a fair story, but get Bond back . . . and Wellman. The ending of "The Man Who Murdered Himself" was too obvious, you made it even more so by telling us all about it on the contents page. "The Machine from the Past" and "Mr. Duffy's Other Life" were pretty good; you are publishing too many of this type though, one every two months will be enough from now on. . .

What! No cartoons? 'S'matter, use up your supply in Amazing's Anniversary Issue?

Why wasn't "If the Sun Turned Green" listed in the contents?

Get more than one in "Introducing the Author" by having them cut down on the gas and give us the bare facts.

You print the interesting letters. Wait a minute! ! ! You're all wrong—you print mine. . .

Wallace E. Buchholz,
330 Spaulding Ave.,
Ripon, Wis.

We read the story you mention, and all it had

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in common with McGivern's fine yarn was "will power." As for being unable to rate it, we disagree. We read it a half-dozen times in the process of putting the magazine together, and we liked it better each time. In short, it was an excellent yarn, and you are the only reader so far to disagree, if you do! The cartoon in the last issue was yanked to supply space to announce our going monthly. It was a last minute decision, and the only place we could put it. As for the author department, our readers like to know all they can about the author. More than one a month, and we'd soon be stymied for material.—Ed.

ANOTHER "THINKER OUT LOUD"

Sirs:

In answer to your editorial in the March issue. YOU are a very definite personality. A charming one. I think the phrase "a swell guy" serves very neatly. Nothing "stiff" or "stilted" nor do you talk down to your readers as if you thought them all children. You could edit a country weekly and build a good circulation. You are at your best when you just think out loud . . . a la Odd McIntyre. (I am STILL wondering about those 116 dog pictures!!!)

As to love. Many very young readers protest loudly against the love element in stories. They are really arguing with themselves. After all, *Rap*, don't YOU remember being "off women for life" every so often!!!! You shouldn't take those chaps seriously. As you pointed out, human beings ACT on MOTIVES. So? WHY then would chaps write protests against love interest in stories? It irks them? H-m-m-m . . . all right. Then WHY does a love angle irk 'em? Answer is obvious. We do not even need Oscar to help us figure THAT out!

WHAT IS LOVE ANYHOW?

Some would define it as "The Biological Urge." I do NOT agree. I can love horses, dogs, cats and my old-maid aunt. There just ain't no biological urge involved.

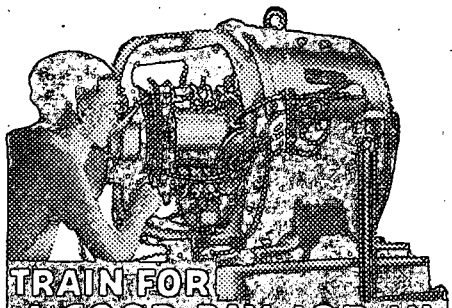
Personally I think love is a sort of sympathy, a sort of "tune" . . . like we tune a receiving set to a certain radio station. Now and then we run across some one whose thoughts and emotions strike an answering chord in our own hearts and minds, and we call that response "affection."

There is an old saying, *Rap* . . . "A man who falls in love with a pretty face may find a face more fair. BUT a man who loves an ugly woman is in love forever!"

And THAT brings me to Don Wilcox's story: "The Secret of the Stone Doll." That story is a literary CRIME. Wilcox builds up to a terrific climax that isn't there . . . it just goes "pfft."

Let's imagine a little twist. The chap is horrified, grief stricken, crushed. This old, old woman . . . his lovely Looma??????!!!! He still LOVES HER, old woman or not.

HE WANTS TO BE OLD ALSO! If this crazy thing can be for her, why not for him? He pours out his heart . . . and they turn back together to the cave. . . he and this feeble old white-haired



TRAIN FOR A GOOD PAY JOB IN ELECTRICITY

ON REAL MOTORS, GENERATORS, ETC.

PAY TUITION AFTER GRADUATION

Practical training on full size electrical equipment. **"Learn by Doing"—12 weeks' shop training.** No previous experience or advanced education needed. Send the Coupon NOW for Big Free Illustrated Book.

Learn about the "Pay Tuition After Graduation Plan." "Part Time Employment Plan." "Job After Graduation Service." NOW . . . **extra 4 weeks' Radio Course** included at no extra tuition cost.

MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY

H. C. LEWIS, Pres., Coyne Electrical School
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 51-66, Chicago, Ill.

Please send me your Big Free Book and details of your "Pay Tuition After Graduation Plan" and **4 weeks' Radio Course.**

Name.....

Street.....

City.....State.....

FOREMEN; SUPERINTENDENTS PRODUCTION MEN

Study

INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT

Millions of men pouring into new or expanded factories require thousands more production executives to supervise them. That spells real opportunity for you if you are ambitious. You can step up to a better job. Your present experience and ability may need only a fuller knowledge of production and management principles and methods. LaSalle training in *Industrial Management* will help you greatly. It is interesting, condensed, practical—planned for men like you. You can study it in your spare time, at home—and at moderate cost. If you want to get ahead, ask for our free 48 page booklet on Industrial Management—it gives full details. Send this ad or write today.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

A Correspondence Institution

Dept. 575-IM, CHICAGO

Be a RADIO Technician

Learn at Home—Make Good Money

Get facts about job opportunities in Radio and those coming in Television. Read how you prepare at home in spare time. Hundreds I trained have good Radio jobs or their own Radio businesses. Many make $30, $40, $50 a week. Many make $5 to $10 a week extra fixing Radios in spare time while learning. Mail coupon.

MR. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 1EM
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.
Mail me your 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio" FREE.
(No salesman will call. Please write plainly.) AGE.....

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY..... STATE.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FREE SAMPLES OF REMARKABLE TREATMENT FOR

Stomach Ulcers

Due to Gastric Hyperacidity

H. H. Bromley, of Shelburne, Vt., writes: "I suffered for years with acid-stomach trouble. My doctors told me I had acid stomach ulcers and would have to diet the rest of my life. Before taking your treatment I had lost a lot of weight and could eat nothing but soft foods and milk. After taking Von's Tablets, I felt perfectly well, ate almost anything and gained back the weight I had lost." If you suffer from indigestion, gastritis, heartburn, bloating or any other stomach trouble due to gastric hyperacidity, you, too, should try Von's for prompt relief. Send for FREE Samples of this remarkable treatment and details of trial offer with money back guarantee. Instructive Booklet is included. Write:

PHILADELPHIA VON CO. Dept. 712-H
Fox Building, Philadelphia, Pa.

TYPEWRITER 1/3 PRICE

STANDARD OFFICE MODELS
1/3 MFRS. ORIG. PRICE
Easiest Terms as Low as 60¢ A WEEK
All late models completely rebuilt like brand new. FULLY GUARANTEED.
No Money Down - 10 Day Trial
Free price-smashing catalog shows all makes in colors. FREE COURSE IN TYPING INCLUDED. See catalog before you buy. SEND NOW.
INTERNATIONAL TYPEWRITER EXCH.
Dept. 592, 231 W. Monroe St., Chicago, Ill.

10c A DAY

DO YOU WANT TO STOP TOBACCO?

Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have. Make yourself free and happy with Tobacco Redeemer. Not a substitute, not habit forming. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and dependable, easy way to relieve the craving many men have.

Newell Pharmacal Co.
Dept. 600, St. Louis, Mo.

FREE BOOK

IS EPILEPSY INHERITED? WHAT CAUSES IT?

A booklet containing the opinions of famous doctors on this interesting subject will be sent FREE, while they last, to any reader writing to the Educational Division, 535 Fifth Avenue, Dept. NF-5, New York, N. Y.

MAKE MORE MONEY

Taking Orders For The NIMROD Line

Earn more every day in the year representing old established firm with a complete line of fast selling necessities: Shirts of all kinds, Ties, Underwear, Hosiery, Raincoats, Sweaters, Pants, Belts, Breeches, Shoes, Ensembles, Sport Coats, Uniforms, Summer Suits, etc. Every item guaranteed. Experience unnecessary.

Write quick for FREE SALES EQUIPMENT
NIMROD COMPANY,
4922-M Lincoln Ave., Chicago, Ill.

MEN WANTED

Side Line — Spare Time — Full Time
BIG CASH COMMISSIONS ADVANCED DAILY

Take orders for printing, advertising specialties, office supplies, book matches, stimulators, etc. Over 2000 NECESSITY ITEMS for all retail stores, gas stations, business offices, etc., at price savings of more than half. Elaborate SAMPLE DISPLAY OUTFIT sent FREE. Write quick!
NORTHWESTERN, 625-CX WEST JACKSON, CHICAGO, ILL.

woman. . . He . . . bent on throwing away his youth, his strength, all that the vigorous years of life can mean.

SO? The call for a BRAVE man . . . as a mate for the chosen woman of the tribe . . . fits now in our story! (In the Wilcox ending . . . it is meaningless. Just as the taboo is meaningless.)

BOTH have proven their ability to rise above things that would break most folks. BOTH have chosen dedication of self to the good of the tribe.

All the Traysomians are now their children. To love, rule, guide . . . and end up with 'em kneeling very solemn, reverent and happy . . . facing the setting sun or sumpin'.

Then the story makes sense. Fantastic sense, but a kind of sense. As Wilcox ended the story it is as unpalatable as a warmed over fried egg. Forgive me, *Rap*, but THAT comes right back to land in YOUR lap. YOU should not have accepted that anticlimax of an ending Wilcox gave you.

The other stories? "Slaves of the Fish Men" was a typical E.R.B. blood 'n' thunder yarn. Quite acceptable. The others were POT BOILERS. I also like Oscar, but just the same he turned up in a pot boiler this time. You say yourself: "James Norman rushed him into new adventures." Quite so. RUSHED is the word!

Don't let all the criticism get you down. I wouldn't buy the mag if I didn't like it and enjoy the stuff you dig up. Nor would I be so critical if you didn't publish some swell yarns. So I get critical when others fail to hit the same plane.

George A. Foster,
P. O. Box 188,
Stoughton, Mass.

P. S. Was amused to note in editor's notation anent Carson of Venus that you said Venus was "barely a sleeper jump in the vast reaches of infinite space." H-m-m-m . . . ya sound like our mutual friend, Pahjois Tuuli. YOU don't happen to hail from Uranus also do you? ! ! ! !

What an argument you'd have on your hands among an authors' group! Any story can be written a hundred ways. Your way is just another way. Editorially, we say it's good, but just a bit on the sentimental side. As for being from Uranus, maybe we are!—Ed.

A SUGGESTION

Sirs:

Would it entail too much expense to publish all of Burrough's early novels one at a time, in magazine form?

Many readers of Fantasy, who up until now have not been able to get them, would like to have the entire works of E. R. Burroughs, the Prince of Fictioneers, in their collection. I am sure an idea of this sort would meet with the approval of many.

In complimenting the recent issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, let me say that it is still the same old mag. Better than ever if that is possible.

The Burroughs novel was, of course, first.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Keep St. John.

Secret of the Stone Doll came in second.

Third: *Beyond The Time Door.*

Fourth: *Adopted Son of the Stars.*

Fifth: *The Thought Robot.*

Sixth: *Death Walks in Washington.*

Seventh: I DON'T LIKE SPACE SHIPS, so not having read this story, I can't pass an opinion.

Jay Jackson is swell and gives St. John a close race for the title of THE BEST INTERIOR ILLUSTRATOR of the time.

Vaughan Ralf Heiner,
225 Second St.,
California, Pa.

Republishing all of the Burroughs works would be a colossal task. And we believe the readers would rather have new works by Burroughs than reprints. After all, his books can be purchased in any bookstore.—Ed.

INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR

(Concluded from page 135)

Leaving Mr. Edison's employ, Cummings began writing scientific fiction for many magazines. His stories gripped the popular imagination and they "clicked." Mr. Cummings' success as a writer has been meteoric. In a few years he became one of the world's most popular authors of science fiction.

Perhaps one of his most popular books was "Tarrano, The Conqueror," published as a $2.00 edition.

Ray Cummings was the inventor of the type of story known as the "atom world" stories, in which imaginative journeys into the infinitely small, or the infinitely large were accomplished. It is perhaps this type of story which has given him most of his reputation.

When Mr. Cummings asked us what we wanted for AMAZING STORIES, we told him to heark back to the stories he used to spin in the days when he did his best work. Which was a good bit of advice, because not only did Mr. Cummings give us stories like his old masterpieces, but he actually outdid himself and created new ones.

If you don't like "Onslaught of the Druid Girls" in this issue, you are going to be mighty lonely!

We present here the bit of poetry penned by Ray Cummings' daughter in honor of this unusual biography, which might have been titled: "Ray Cummings, The Story Of His Daughter!"

But then, he's proud of her—and we are proud of them both!

MOONLIGHT

We sat together there, as twilight fell,
And watched the truant sun slip fast away
From out the rippling river's dancing spray;
The chimes of some great temple tolled a knell
Of mournfulness for this, the death of day.
And then bright beams of silver, to array
The laughing waves, appeared to cast a spell
Upon the earth. He spoke . . . but of the way
The Nebular Hypothesis could tell
Me all I wished to know of whirling gas,
And that concerning heat in molten mass.
I listened, yet to me, the moon throughout the while
Was but a ray of joy to light a lover's smile.

—*Elizabeth Starr.*

DOWNGO TIRE
On GOODYEAR FIRESTONE-GOODRICH PRICES
and Other Standard Makes

Only our 25 years' experience, big buying power and volume production make it possible to offer these amazing tire values. Think of it; Standard Brand reconditioned tires, serviceably repaired by experts with high-grade materials at a fraction of original cost. Order now. Enjoy the tremendous savings our cut prices make possible.

$1.85
28x4.75-19

BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40-21	$1.98	$0.85
29x4.50-20	1.85	.85
30x4.50-21	1.98	.95
28x4.75-19	1.85	.95
29x4.75-20	2.10	.95
29x5.00-19	2.25	1.05
30x5.00-20	2.40	1.05
5.25-17	2.49	1.15
28x5.25-18	2.45	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.45	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.50	1.15
31x5.25-21	2.90	1.15
5.50-17	2.75	1.15
28x5.50-18	2.75	1.15
29x5.50-19	2.75	1.15
6.00-16	2.15	1.45
6.00-17	2.85	1.15
30x6.00-18	2.85	1.15
31x6.00-19	2.85	1.15
32x6.00-20	2.95	1.25
32x6.00-21	3.10	1.25
32x6.50-20	3.20	1.35

TRUCK BALLOONS

Size	Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	$3.10	$1.65
6.50-20	3.35	1.95
7.00-20	4.90	2.95
7.50-20	5.15	2.75
8.25-20	6.75	4.95

HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x5	$3.50	$1.95
32x6	6.95	2.75
34x7	9.95	3.25
33x7	9.45	3.95
36x8	9.65	3.95
40x8	11.60	4.15

ALL OTHER SIZES
DEALERS WANTED

EVERY TIRE GUARANTEED
Our Guarantee Bond agrees to replace at ½ price tires failing to give full 6 months' service. Replacements f. o. b. Chicago.
Don't Delay—Order Today

SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered, ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct 5 per cent if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

PERRY-FIELD TIRE & RUBBER CO.
2328-30 S. Michigan Ave., Dept. 7743, Chicago

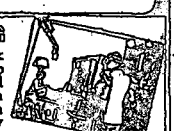
COMING SOON
Another Great "OSCAR OF MARS" Story
By JAMES NORMAN

LEARN RADIO
SERVICING COURSE—8 WEEKS
OPERATING (INCLUDES SERVICING)—5 MONTHS

H. C. Lewis

I'LL FINANCE YOUR TRAINING

Mail coupon today for free book showing how you can learn Radio Operating, Servicing, Sound and Television in a few short weeks in Coyne Shops and also how you can pay tuition in easy monthly payments after graduation.



LEARN BY DOING

On real Radio receiving and transmitting equipment at Coyne. Simple, easy method of practical shop training. You don't need previous experience. Prepare for Radio Operators' Government license Exam, and for good jobs in Broadcast, Police Radio, Aircraft Radio, Ships, Commercial Radio stations, or in service shops and radio factories. "Learn by doing", the quick, modern way, at Coyne Shops in Chicago.

SEND COUPON TODAY

EARN WHILE LEARNING
Job Help After Graduation

We assist you in getting part-time work to help pay living expenses and give you real employment service after you graduate.

H. C. LEWIS, Pres., COYNE RADIO SCHOOL,
500 So. Paulina St., Dept. 51-8E, Chicago, Ill.

Please send me your free book and details of easy Pay-After-Graduation Plan.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IF you suffer pain and misery of Varicose Ulcers, or Open Leg Sores, send away at once for FREE Booklet "THE LIEPE METHODS FOR HOME USE." Tells all about this 40-year-old method, praised and endorsed by thousands. **Liepe Methods, Dept. F-49, 3284 N. Green Bay Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin.**

Patents and Trade Marks

Patent and profit by your inventions. Protect your most valuable assets . . . Expert personal service.

LESTER L. SARGENT

Registered Patent Attorney

1115 K St., N. W. Washington, D. C.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Photography

FREE—ONE ROLL DEVELOPED AND PRINTED FREE. Just to get acquainted, we will beautifully develop and print your first 6 to 16 exposure roll FREE plus 5x7 inch enlargement FREE, also sensational, new folding folio to frame your prints, all free with this ad. (Enclosing 10c for handling and mailing appreciated.) **Dean Studios, Dept. 1054, Omaha, Nebraska.**

8 ENLARGEMENTS AND FILM DEVELOPED, 116 SIZE or smaller, 25c coin; enlarged prints 3c each; special offer: enclose advertisement and negative for hand-colored enlargement free with order 25c or more. ENLARGE PHOTO, Box 791, Dept. ZD, Boston, Mass.

QUIZ ANSWERS

(Quiz on page 136)

MANIPULATIONS IN MATH

Ans: there is only one solution to this, others being only reversals of the first.

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

STAR GAZING

(a) Brahe, Hevelius, Maskelyne, Herschel, Gould, Darwin. (b) Arabians. (c) Copernicus. (d) Alvan Clark.

ARMCHAIR ARCHAEOLOGISTS

(a) Phoenician. (b) Arabic. (c) Gaelic. (d) Russian. (e) Greek.

WHO AM I?

(a) Robert W. Bunsen, creator of the "Bunsen Burner." (b) Luther Burbank.

YOUR KEN OF CHEM

(a) Egyptians. (b) O, $FeSO_4$, Pb, Mn, Si.

CORRESPONDENCE CORNER

Marianne Ferguson, 20 So. Buffun St., Worcester, Mass., would like to correspond with anyone in their twenties interested in science, movies, stamps, etc. . . . Langley Searles, 19 E. 235th St., N.Y.C., has SF and fantasy books for sale. . . Stanley Crandon, 656 W. 162nd St., N.Y.C., wishes to sell books by Burroughs and Claudy, at moderate prices; write for list. . . Herbert Van D'Elden, U.S.N., Box 7, "U.S.S. Texas," % Postmaster, N.Y.C., has been living out of the U.S. for several years and wishes to correspond with intelligent girls interested in classical music and sciences . . . M. Schwartz, 1793 Prospect Pl., Brooklyn, N.Y., would like pen pals from everywhere; will reply promptly. . . Michael Arthur Torro, 25 Wall St., Cranford, N.J., wants correspondents of any country interested in sports, science, stamps, photography and radio. . . C. E. Gallagher, General Delivery, Keddie, Calif., is anxious to buy John Taine's "The Gold Tooth," "Green Fire," "The Purple Sapphire," and back numbers of AMAZING STORIES; will pay well. . . Edmund Vincent Cowdry, Jr., 121 1901 Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., would like to correspond with young ladies (17-20) who are interested in SF and traveling; college girls preferred. . . Thomas "Tommie" E. Townsend, 1524 W. 28th St., Little Rock, Ark., would like to contact those in the metropolitan area of Greater Little Rock with intentions of forming a fan club; call 4-3856. . . Jack L. Thompson, 16 yrs., 118½ N. Main St., Apt. 4, Mishawaka, Ind., wants pen pals anywhere. . . Albion E. Doxsee, 4 Glenlake Ave., Toronto 9 Canada, would like to receive copies of AMAZING STORIES after February '41; war conditions prevent his obtaining them any other way. . . R. K. Paris, 318 Springlake Ave., Madisonville, Ky., wants April and October '39 issues of AMAZING STORIES. . . Reed Frederick, 298 W. Franklin St., Ephrata, Pa., would like correspondents around 17 yrs. . . . Prof. Chester Hoey, 301 6th Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y., wants correspondents. . . Richard Gookins, 2605 State St., Salem, Ore., wishes feminine pen pals (17-22); will reply to all communications. . . Dell Andrews, 29 yrs., 41 Retta Ave., New Miami, Hamilton, Ohio, would like to discuss by mail subjects on airplanes as well as science. . . Marvin Goldenberg, 1382 Goodfellow, St. Louis, Mo., wishes pen pals of 14 yrs.; will reply to all letters. . . Edward Gonia, 2475 S. Austin St., Milwaukee, Wisc., 16¾ yrs., wants male correspondents *not* interested in stamp collecting, astronomy, chemistry or physics. . . M. Kritzberg, 4748 N. Crawford, Chicago, Ill., has hundreds of AMAZING STORIES and other SF magazines; postcard will bring free list. . .

COMING SOON
CIRCE RETURNS IN NAT SCHACHNER'S GREATEST NOVEL
THE ENCHANTRESS

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

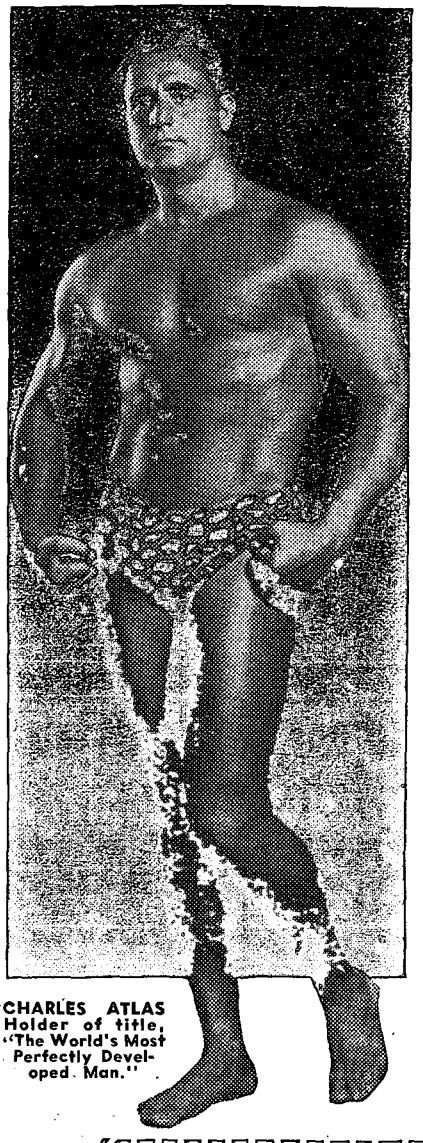
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The 97 Pound Weakling

—Who became "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man"

"I'll prove that YOU too can be a NEW MAN!"

—Charles Atlas



CHARLES ATLAS
Holder of title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

I KNOW, myself, what it means to have the kind of body that people pity! Of course, you wouldn't know it to look at me now, but I was once a skinny weakling who weighed only 97 lbs! I was ashamed to strip for sports or undress for a swim. I was such a poor specimen of physical development that I was constantly self-conscious and embarrassed. And I felt only HALF-ALIVE.

Then I discovered *"Dynamic Tension."* It gave me a body that won for me the title "World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

When I say I can make you over into a man of giant power and energy, I know what I'm talking about. I've seen my new system, *"Dynamic Tension,"* transform hundreds of weak, puny men into Atlas Champions.

Only 15 Minutes a Day

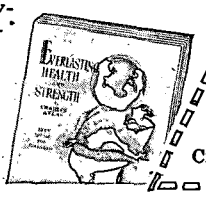
Do you want big, broad shoulders—a fine, powerful chest—biceps like steel—arms and legs **rippling** with muscular strength—a stomach ridged with bands of sinewy muscle—and a build you can be proud of? Then just give me the opportunity to prove that *"Dynamic Tension"* is what you need.

No "ifs," "ands," or "maybes." Just tell me where you want handsome, powerful muscles. Are you fat and flabby? Or skinny and gawky? Are you short-winded, pepless? Do you hold back and let others walk off with the prettiest girls, best jobs, etc.? Then write for details about *"Dynamic Tension"* and learn how I can make you a healthy, confident, powerful HE-MAN.

"Dynamic Tension" is an entirely NATURAL method. Only 15 minutes of your spare time daily is enough to show amazing results—and it's actually fun! *"Dynamic Tension"* does the work.

Send for FREE BOOK

Mail the coupon right now for full details and I'll send you my illustrated book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." Tells all about my *"Dynamic Tension"* method. Shows actual photos of men I've made into Atlas Champions. It's a valuable book! And it's FREE. Send for your copy today. Mail the coupon to me personally. CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 9E, 115 East 23rd St., New York, N. Y.



CHARLES ATLAS,
Dept. 9E,
115 East 23rd Street,
New York, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of *"Dynamic Tension"* will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscular development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name.....
(Please print or write plainly.)

Address.....

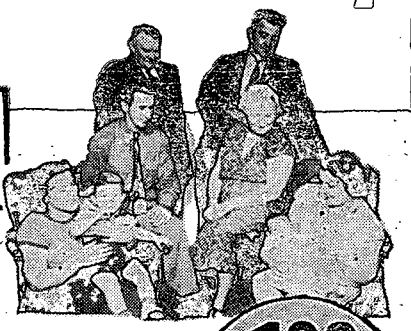
City..... State.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now! Bankers Life & Casualty Co.

Insures Your Entire Family

IN A SINGLE POLICY



New TRIPLE BENEFIT FAMILY GROUP POLICY WITH COPYRIGHTED "SAME DAY PAY" FEATURE!

YOURS For Only a Few Pennies a Day!

AS PLAINLY STATED IN THE POLICY

YOUR ENTIRE FAMILY IS INSURED UP TO:

$1,000.00 maximum for natural or ordinary accidental death

$2,000.00 maximum for auto accidental death...

$3,000.00 maximum for accidental death by travel...

All for $1.00 Per Month

The policy is not cancelled by the death of one of the insured members. The benefits are paid and the policy remains in force insuring the rest of the members in the family group as long as premiums are paid. Monthly premiums and benefits are graded according to the attained ages of members insured.

INSURES MEN, WOMEN, CHILDREN—AGES 1-75 IN A SINGLE POLICY

At last! Bankers Life and Casualty Company now offers you SAFE, LIBERAL, LEGAL RESERVE INSURANCE that protects your entire family—*at amazing LOW COST!* Imagine—only $1.00 per month pays for Father, Mother, Children, Grandparents and gives you Fast-paying Single, Double and TRIPLE BENEFIT protection against natural, ordinary accidental, auto or travel accidental death, on every member insured. And! Cash benefits can be collected *on SAME DAY death occurs—through your own local home town bank! Think of it!*

$1.00 A MONTH PAYS FOR ALL

NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION

Men, Women, Children from ages 1 to 75 are included in the wonderful new improved low cost policy without medical examination. This splendid policy is now being hailed and proclaimed all over America—and everywhere grateful families are turning to this marvelous new policy for the immediate cash it brings them in their actual hour of need. Don't delay mailing FREE coupon—you may be sorry later.

One never knows. Recently a Florida man and his wife were both killed in a single accident. They sent for their Family Policy only a few days before. And Bankers paid DOUBLE benefits on BOTH deaths. If they had delayed even a few days, they would not have been covered.

HERE IS HOW YOU COLLECT AT YOUR LOCAL BANK!

COLLECT FULL BENEFITS AT YOUR LOCAL BANK—SAME DAY DEATH OCCURS

Bankers new copyrighted "Same Day Pay" Policy authorizes your local home town bank to pay claims *in full*, in strict accordance with the terms of the policy. Think what it will mean to you to have this great policy—at only a few cents a day!

ENTIRE POLICY PAYABLE AT SIGHT

The policy form is negotiable. You can use it like a post-dated check. Present it at *your own bank* immediately following death of a family member and the bank can make full payment. Think of the convenience of this amazing, quick-paying feature.

Here's Your Opportunity to Insure Your ENTIRE Family!

Double Benefit Paid Before 10-Day Inspection Period Expired!

B. F. G., Texas, says: "I want to thank your company for your fair and square dealing. I want to tell the world you pay off according to your agreement in the policy. I'll be glad to recommend you to anyone as honest and on the square."

SEND NO MONEY

MAIL COUPON FOR FREE OFFER

Remember! We don't ask you to risk a single penny—get this copyrighted "Same-Day-Pay" Policy on our 10-Day Free Inspection Offer. Only a limited number of these policies to be issued, so hurry. It is to your advantage to *Act At Once!*

NO AGENT WILL CALL

You can examine this superb policy AT OUR EXPENSE. Just fill in coupon now. No agent will call. No obligation. Send no money.

BANKERS LIFE AND CASUALTY COMPANY
Bankers Insurance Bldg., Jefferson Sta., Dept. 192
Chicago, Illinois

Send your Free 10-Day Trial Offer. I want complete information; all the facts with proof—letters from beneficiaries. Please send at once, absolutely *free* and postage paid.

Name.....

Address or R.F.D.....

City or Town.....State.....

Send No Money—Rush coupon today—No Agent will call!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED